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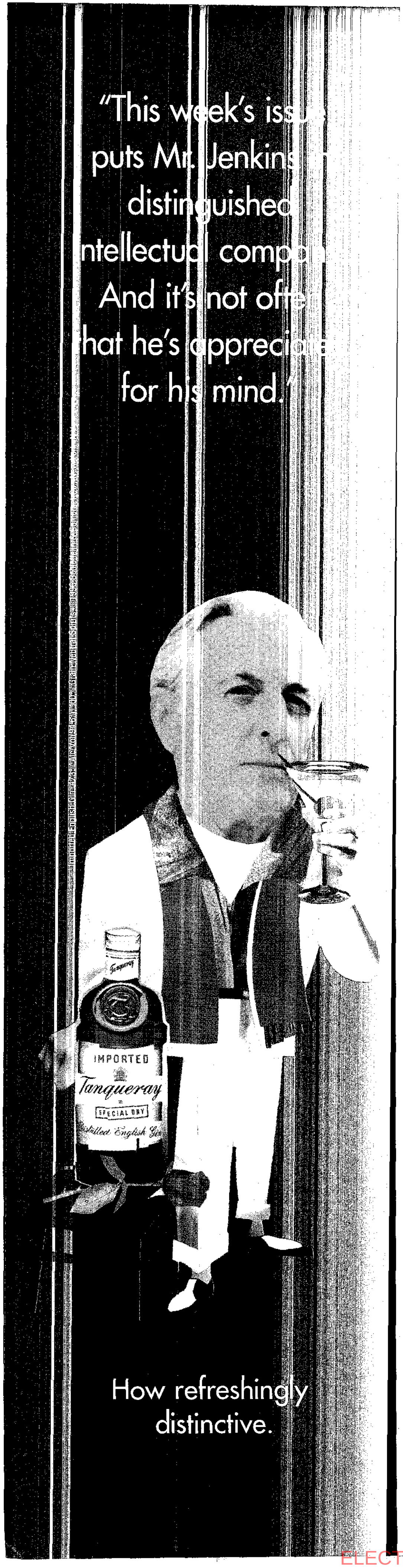

THE NEW YORKER
SPECIAL WOMEN'S ISSUE

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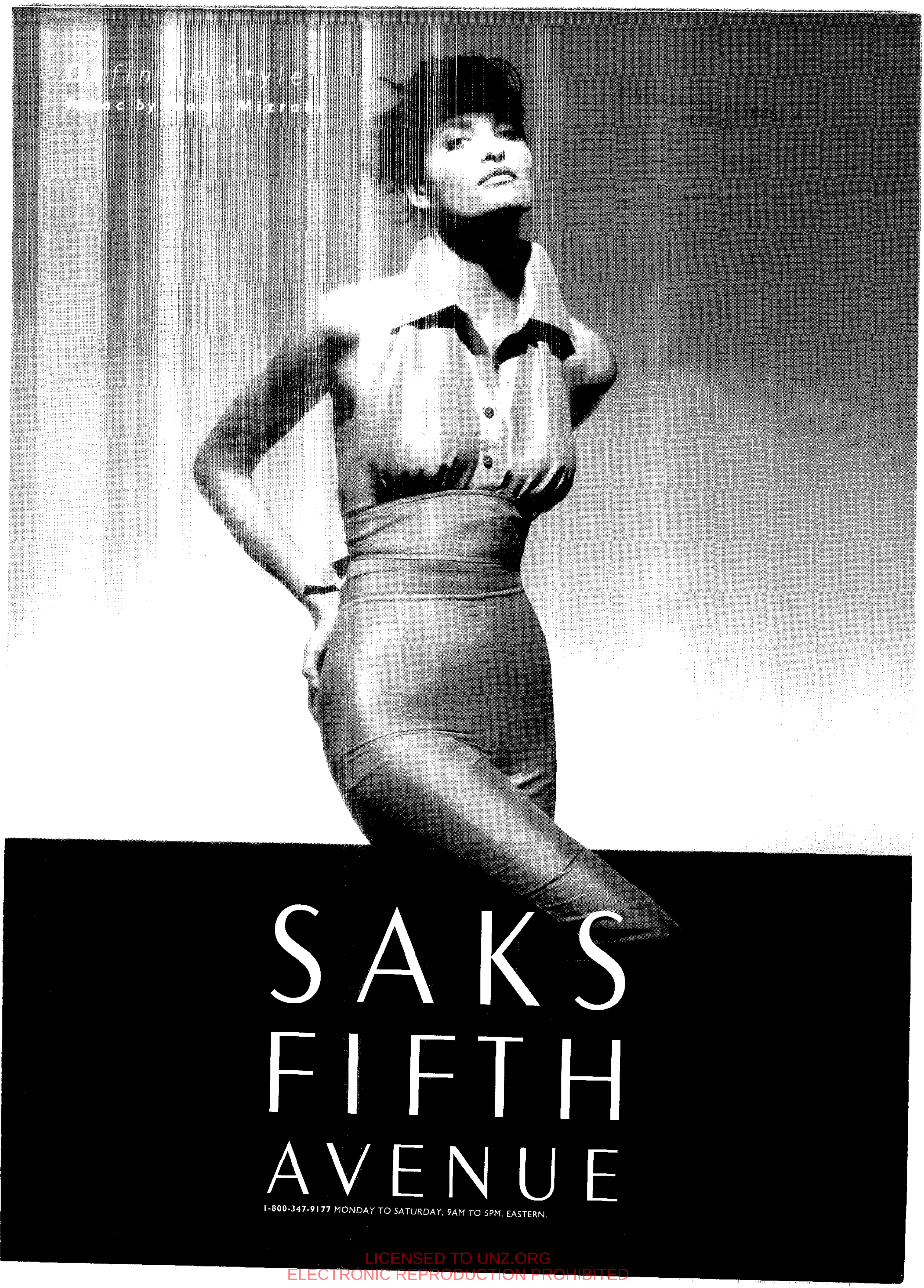
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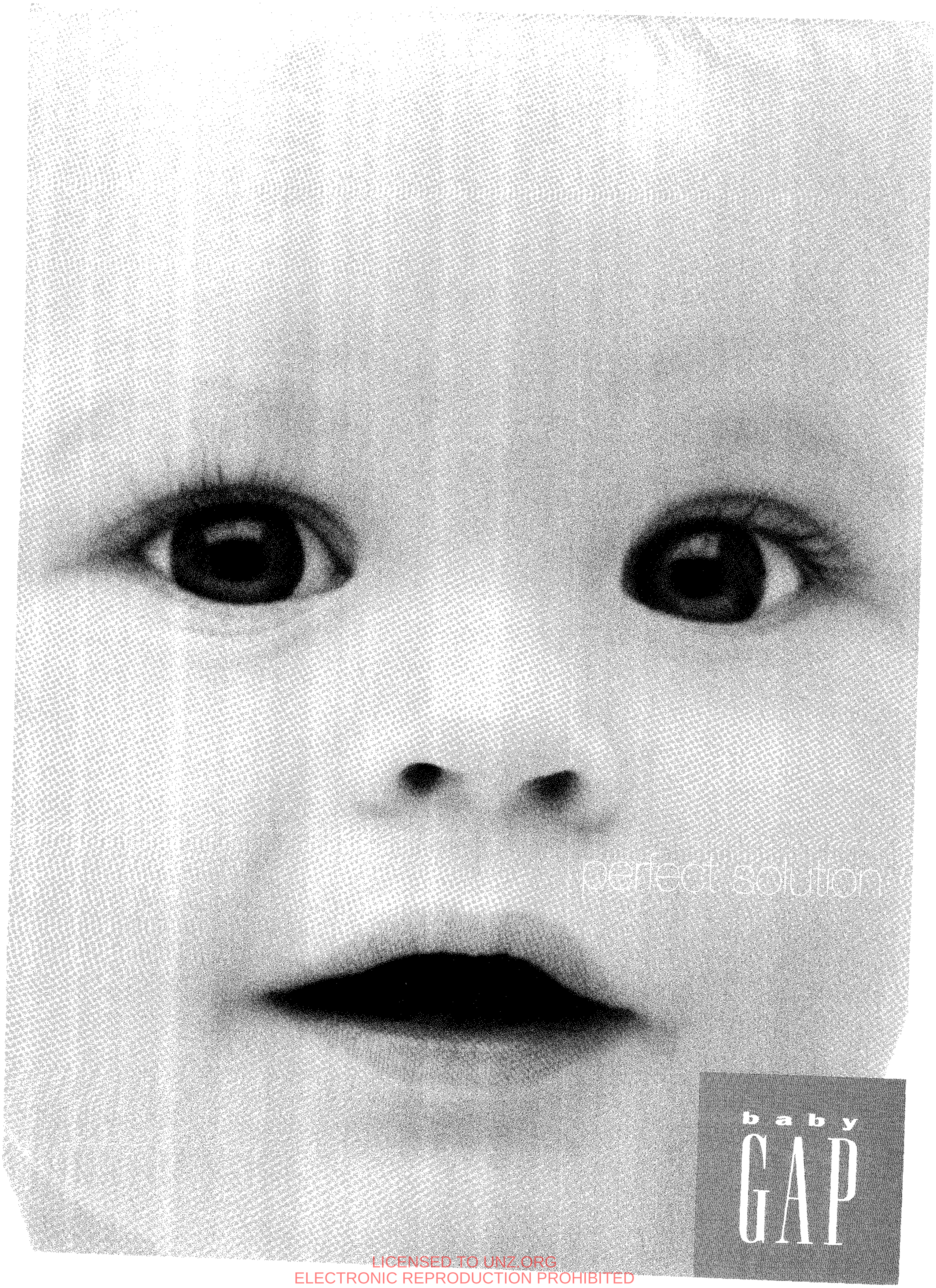
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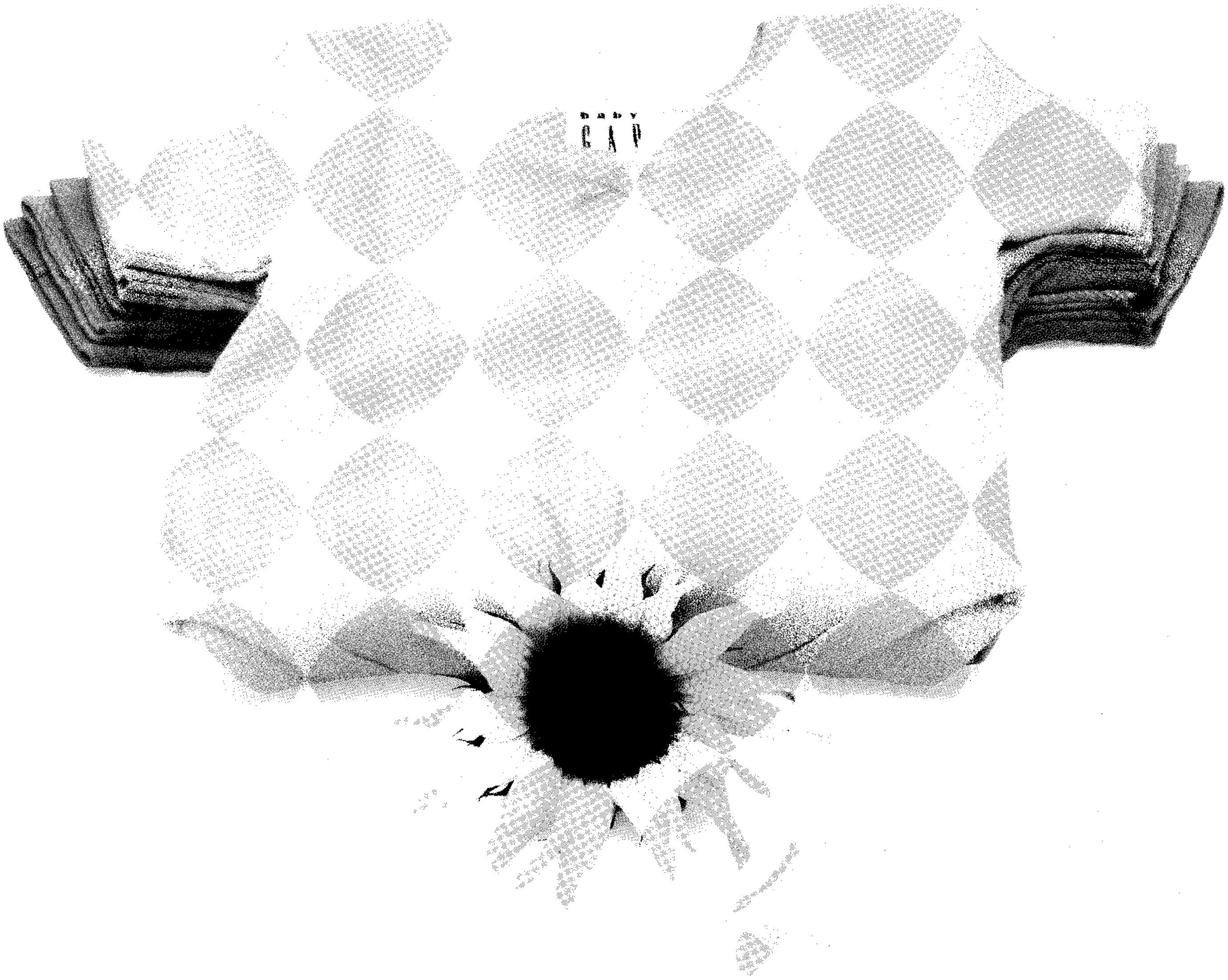

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COMMENT

SISTER ACTS

By any other name, feminism lives.

SISTERHOOD is powerful, but so is sibling rivalry; so is the drudgery of daily life; so is conservatism, which, with some unintended help from the sillier reaches of academe, has half succeeded in turning "feminism" into a much mocked anachronism, a mood ring left over from the bell-bottom epoch. The movement's setbacks have become staples of journalese: the feminization of poverty and the breakdown of the family, the glass ceiling and the biological clock, sexual harassment and domestic abuse. Given this litany, no one should be surprised that a revisionist orthodoxy has been hardening: people say that feminism, always an élite movement, is in retreat; that its concerns are distant from the lives of working-class women and young women; and that even those whose lives are an advertisement for its successes have come to disown it. But the contributors to this special issue of *The New Yorker*, on their various field trips, found something else altogether: women who share an eagerness to talk truthfully about their experiences. They are far from defeated. And when they are angry their anger is not the kind that psychoanalysts call unresolved. It is a focussed source of energy and audacity.

"Feminism" doesn't get much respect these days. But after a generation of struggle its results are everywhere: in jobs, from the precinct house to the Pentagon; in legal and reproductive rights; in politics, with women in noticeable numbers now being elected to the offices of mayor and governor; in the parade of firsts, among them Bishop Barbara Harris, Sally Ride, Geraldine Ferraro, and Sandra Day O'Connor. As a way of living, feminism is flourishing, even if lately it has had to travel under assumed names: in a recent Harris poll, although only half of the women questioned identified themselves as feminists, seventy-one per cent said they support "political, economic, and social equality for women." Not that feminism's work is done; the cultural slag heap is full of debris suggesting otherwise. Anita Hill's ladylike diffidence availed her little; looking at the blowhards who applied the torch to her stake, one found it hard to imagine a panel of women doing such a poor job. Nicole Simpson's secondhand access to the perks of Brentwood protected her not at all. And don't the priapic preoccupations of American business, with C.E.O.s giving each other gigantic payoffs at their stockholders' expense, suggest that a few more women suits in the boardroom might tether the corporate proceedings to a little reality?

The cascade of change in law and society, almost all of it for the better, has not washed away the ambivalence that many women feel about their "roles." The most obvious conflict—between family and work—has actually grown sharper as job opportunities have increased. Women seldom explore these troubles with male colleagues or bosses, lest exploration be taken as a concession to backlash; in private, though, women talk passionately about the way things are turning out. Some, who can afford to, abandon their professions and become supermoms with a vengeance, micromanaging their children's lives with Type A intensity. But for American women

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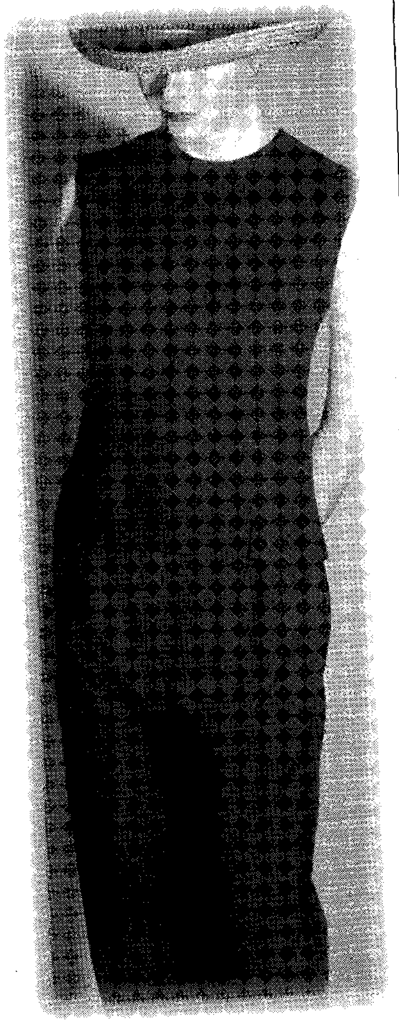

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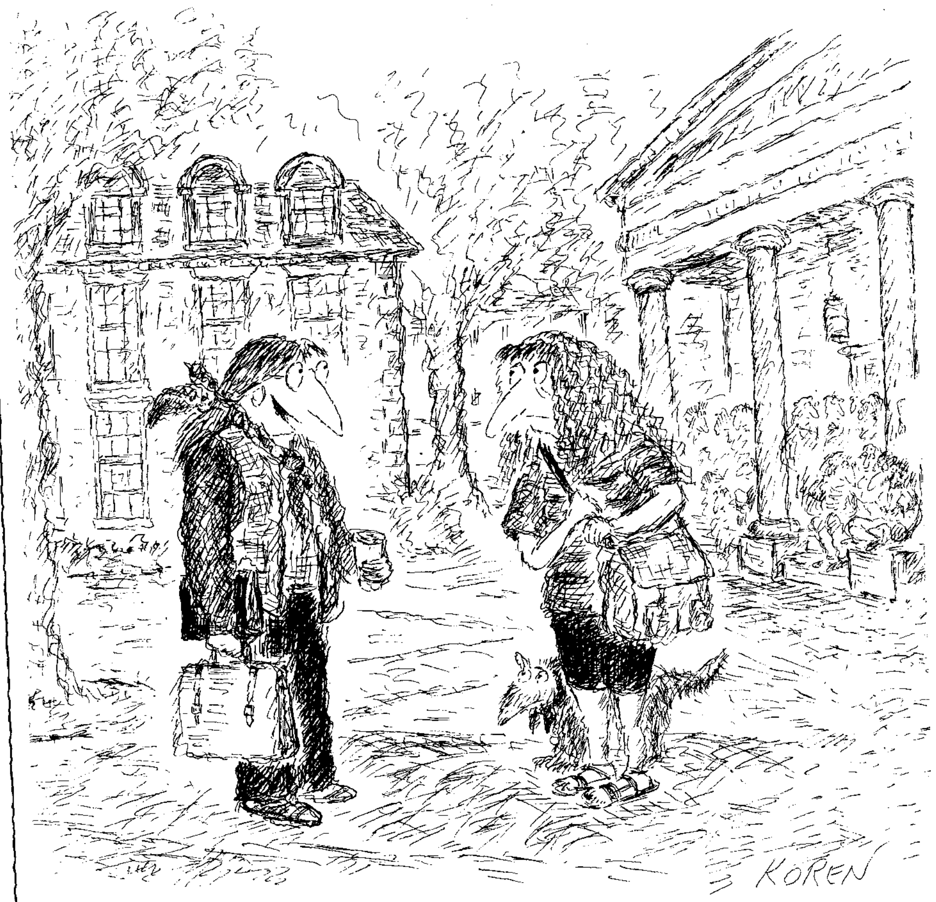

"Even though you're exceptionally well qualified, Kate, I'd say that 'victim' is not a good career choice."

• •

without means the new freedoms are mostly theoretical. Amenities taken for granted in much of the developed world—decent child care and reliably good public education, for example—are out of their reach. Poor women are too busy coping to have the luxury of angst.

Fear of women's potential power is a recurring theme in reactionary times and places. In Morocco in the late sixties, Jane Kramer found this fear in the guise of an imaginary she-demon called Aisha Kandisha, who is capricious and all-powerful, and causes mischief in unpredictable ways. In America right now, the she-demon slot seems to be occupied by Hillary Rodham Clinton, a female who is widely held—sometimes more tenaciously by women than by men—to have overstepped the bounds. The First Lady's life has been scrutinized—as Henry Louis Gates, Jr., points out—with a peculiar combination of thoroughness and obtuseness.

One of the books Hillary Clinton likes to talk about is "Composing a Life," by Mary Catherine Bateson. It includes a passage that forces a reckoning with the notion of "choice"—a loaded word, whether it's applied to abortion rights, to the pursuit of a career, to marriage, or to any and all of the thousands of other moral decisions in a woman's life. Bateson writes, "There has been a tendency to look ahead to some sort of utopia in which women will no longer be torn by the conflicting claims and desires that so often turn their pathways into zigzags or, at best, spirals." Choice itself, and not any particular choice, has been the real goal of the women's movement. And what the experience of the generation since "women's lib" demonstrates is that choice is not an answer to the question of how life should be lived, only a condition for answering that question freely.

—DOROTHY WICKENDEN

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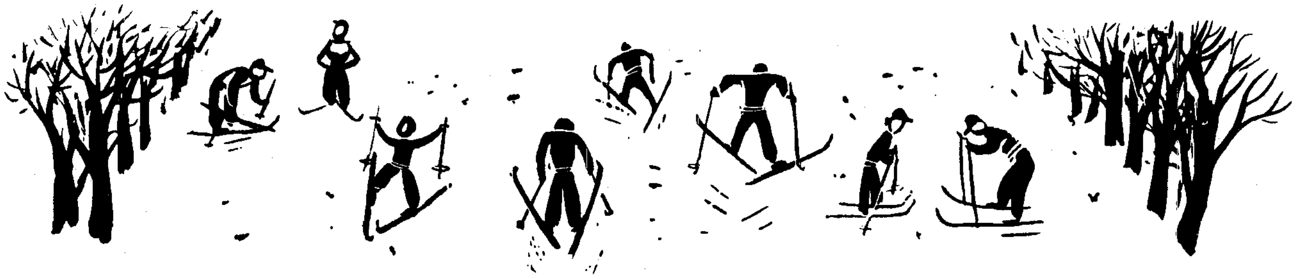

THE THEATRE

Humming Along

New York theatre is beginning to stir from its long post-holiday nap, and music is the wake-up call. Downtown, audiences are pouring out of the New York Theatre Workshop humming numbers from "Rent" (especially the first-act closer, "La Vie Bohème," and a peppy duet called "Tango Maureen") and gliding out of the Public's production of "Dancing on Her Knees," Nilo Cruz's fascinating new magic-realist play about a pair of former tango champions. Uptown, Gerard Alessandrini, who originated that wicked spoof "Forbidden Broadway," in 1982, is back with "Forbidden Hollywood." But the biggest pleasure may be in midtown, where director Josephine Abady has assembled an array of standards for her production of "Bus Stop," at Circle in the Square. It's a delight to hear "Hey There," from "The Pajama Game" (a show that looks set for a revival next season), and the country classics here may just be the coolest theatre sounds around. The one playwright, by the way, who isn't moving to the beat is Stephen Sondheim, who takes a break from musical theatre with his new thriller, "Getting Away With Murder."

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.)

Below the Belt—A new comedy by Richard Dresser, in which three businessmen (Judd Hirsch, Robert Sean Leonard, and Jude Ciccolella) play the corporate game together while based at an industrial compound in a distant land. Directed by Gloria Muzio. Previews begin March 1. (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

Bus Stop—Mary-Louise Parker, Ron Perlman, and Billy Crudup lead the cast in a revival of William Inge's 1955 comedy-drama. Directed by Josephine R. Abady. Two previews on Feb. 21. Opens Feb. 22 at 6:30 and continues through March 17. (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200.)

Dancing on Her Knees—A new play by Nilo Cruz, set in Miami Beach on All Souls' Day, about a pair of former tango champions. With Franca Barchiesi and Paul Calderon. Directed by Graciela Daniele. In previews through Feb. 28. Opens Feb. 29 at 8 and runs through March 17. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 260-2400.)

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Entertaining Mr. Sloane—The Classic Stage Company's production of Joe Orton's 1964 black comedy, with Brian Murray, Ellen Parker, George Hall, and Neil Maffin. Opens Feb. 21 at 7:30 and continues through March 17. (136 E. 13th St. 677-4210.)

Floyd Collins—A new musical by Adam Guettel (score and lyrics) and Tina Landau (book), set in Kentucky in 1925 and based on a true story, about a farmer who is trapped in a cave and becomes the object of a rescue mission that draws national attention. In previews through March 2. Opens March 3 at 7:30. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

Forbidden Hollywood—Gerard Alessandrini takes aim at the West Coast Babylon in this new musical satire. In previews. (Triad, 158 W. 72nd St. 799-4599.)

Getting Away With Murder—John Rubinstein, Terrence Mann, and Christine Ebersole star in Stephen Sondheim and George Furth's new comic thriller. And it's not a musical. In previews. (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

In the Loneliness of the Cottonfields—Patrice Chéreau stars as the Dealer and Pascal Greggory as the Client in a version of Bernard-Marie Koltès's 1987 drama, about a late-night rendezvous on an empty city street. Directed by M. Chéreau. Performances are in French with simultaneous English translation. Opens Feb. 23 at 7 and continues through March 3. (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 1-718 636-4100.)

Inherit the Wind—George C. Scott and Charles Durning go head to head in a National Actors Theatre revival of the 1955 drama about the Scopes "monkey trial." Directed by John Tillinger. Previews begin Feb. 27. (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6280.)

Lion in the Streets—The spirit of a nine-year-old murder victim haunts her inner-city neighborhood in Canadian playwright Judith Thompson's latest drama. In previews through Feb. 22. Opens Feb. 23 at 8 and continues through March 17. (29th Street Repertory, 212 W. 29th St. 465-0575.)

Nothing Like a Dame—Some incomparable women—including Lauren Bacall, Carol Burnett, Zoe Caldwell, Glenn Close, Uta Hagen, Cherry Jones, Phyllis Newman, Kathleen Turner, and Irene Worth—get together for a benefit revue. Feb. 25 at 8. (Virginia, 245 W. 52nd. For more information, call 221-7300, ext. 133.)

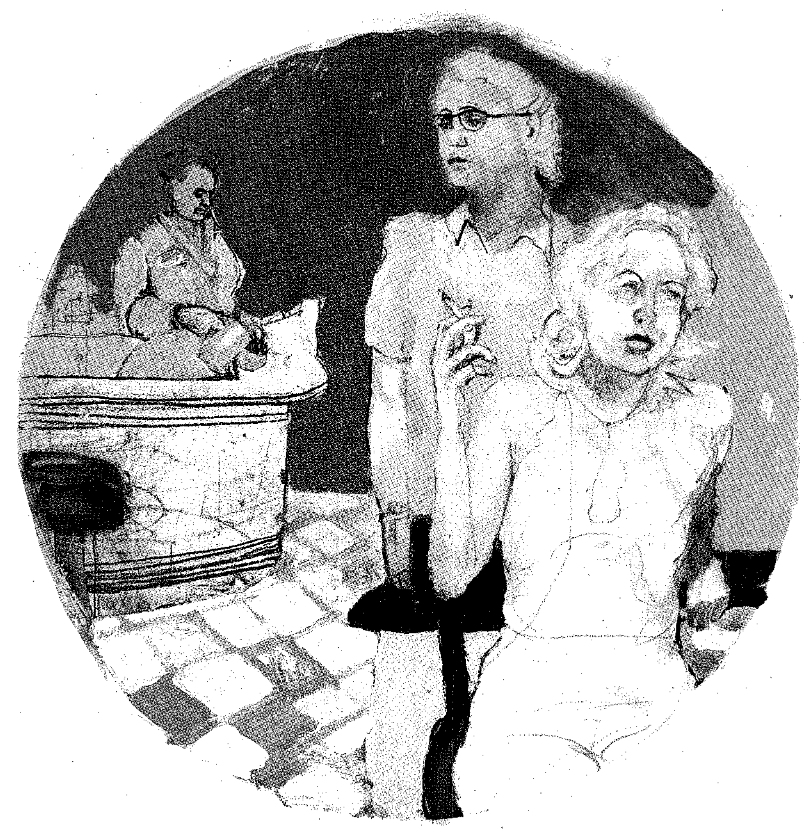
Overtime—A. R. Gurney's new work is a comic sequel to "The Merchant of Venice." The cast includes Nicholas Kepros, Joan McMurtrey, Jere Shea, Rocco Sisto, and Robert Stanton. In previews through March 3. Opens March 5 at 7:30. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

Ruth Draper's New York Ladies—Patricia Norcia returns for one night to perform selections from the repertoire of Ruth Draper (1884-1956), an early master of the monologue. (Weill Recital Hall, at Carnegie Hall. 769-4217.)

Scenes from an Execution—An artist in Renaissance Venice is hired by the state to paint a historic naval battle, in Howard Barker's 1985 play, presented by the Blue Light Theatre Company. In previews through Feb. 25. Opens Feb. 27 at 8 and continues through March 17. (Atlantic, 336 W. 20th St. 239-6200.)

Signature Theatre Company—The company's Adrienne Kennedy season continues with "Sleep Deprivation Chamber," a semiautobiographical drama that the playwright co-wrote with her son Adam, about a family's shattering encounter with the criminal-justice system. Opens Feb. 23 at 8 and continues through March 24. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 260-2400.)

Spoke Man—A one-man show by John Hockenberry, about his adventures reporting the news for National Public Ra-



Kelly Bishop, Patricia Dunnock, and Mary-Louise Parker, in "Bus Stop."

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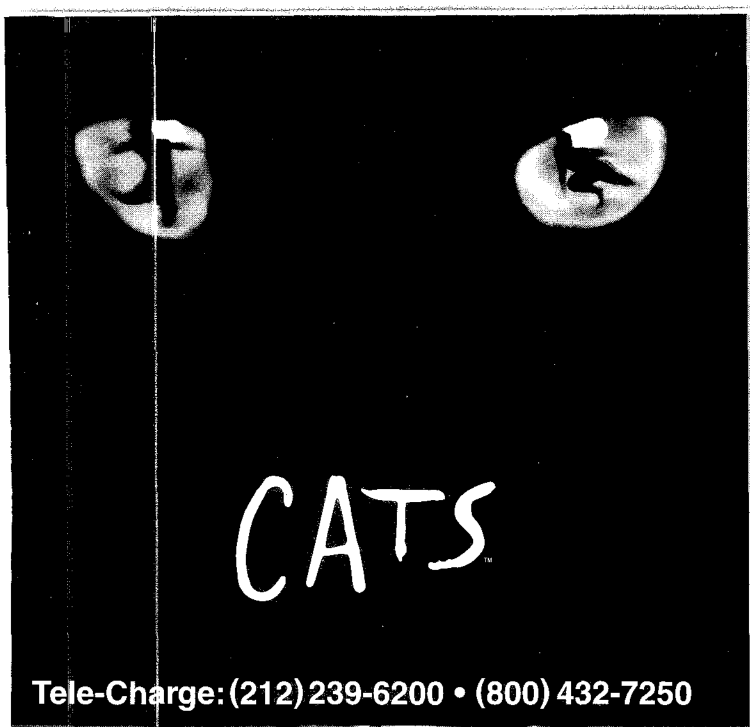

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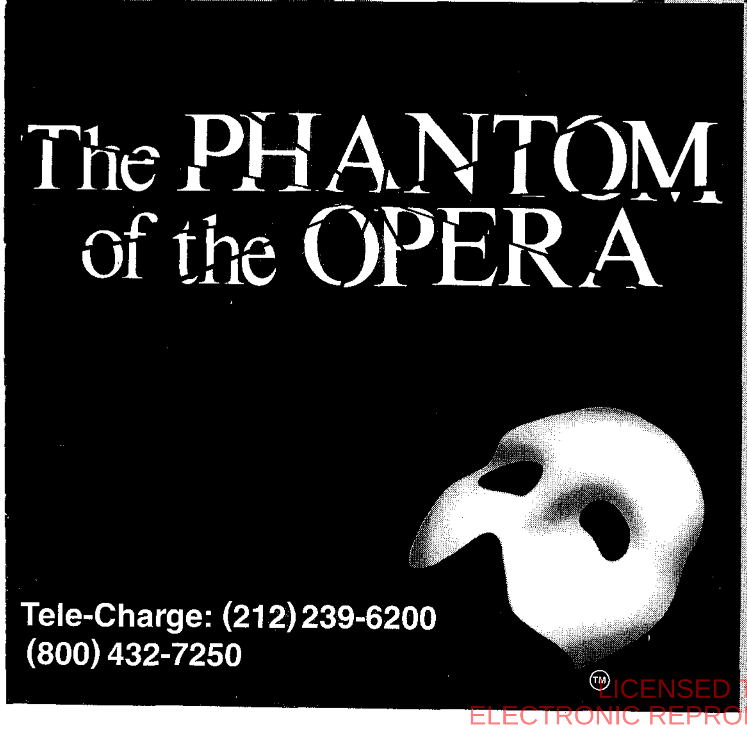
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dio and television from a wheelchair. In previews Feb. 21-March 2. Opens March 3 at 2:30. (American Place, 111 W. 46th St. 239-6200.)

Wake Up and Smell the Coffee—Eric Bogosian's latest monologue. Feb. 20-24 at 8. (Knitting Factory, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. 219-3006.)

A Whistle in the Dark—The Irish Repertory Theatre reprises its 1989 production of Thomas Murphy's satire of politics and the family. In previews Feb. 24-28. Opens Feb. 29 at 7. (132 W. 22nd St. 727-2737.)

OPENED RECENTLY

The Amazing Metrano: An Accidental Comedy—Art Metrano gives an account of his recovery from a paralyzing injury in this one-man comedy. (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 505-0700.)

The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria—The Spanish playwright Fernando Arrabal's 1967 comedy, about two men who develop an array of role-playing relationships—mother-child, torturer-victim, master-slave—while stranded on an island. Presented by the Independent Theatre Company. (House of Candles Theatre, 99 Stanton St. 353-3088.)

Bed and Sofa—A young Moscow wife transfers her affections from her husband to his visiting war buddy in a musical comedy based on the Soviet director Abram Room's celebrated 1926 silent film. G. W. Mercier's chiaroscuro set captures the wit and charm of the movie, but neither Laurence Klavan's intertitle-like libretto nor Andre Ernotte's socialist-realist staging draws out the potential of Polly Pen's playful score. (Vineyard Theatre, 108 E. 15th St. 353-3874. Closes March 10.)

Blue Window—Under Joe Mantello's beautiful direction, Craig Lucas's well-written but slim 1984 play—about a party given by a nervous hostess and attended by six other young New Yorkers—seems almost substantial. David Aaron Baker and Allison Janney stand out in an excellent cast. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

Dixon Place—An evening of one-acts: Christopher Durang's new comedy, "The Hardy Boys & the Mystery of Where Babies Come From," Craig Lucas's "Credo," Lanford Wilson's "The Madness of Lady Bright," and Perry Laylon Ojeda's "The Trick." Directed by Randy Gener. Feb. 24-25 at 7:30. (258 Bowery, near Houston St. 219-3088.)

A Fair Country—Laurence Luckinbill plays an American diplomat whose family (Judith Ivey, Dan Futterman, and Matt McGrath) disintegrates after he tries to put an end to their long assignment in South Africa, in a new play by Jon Robin Baitz. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

The Father—As the benighted protagonist of Strindberg's 1887 drama, Frank Langella is a revelation—he explores every forbidding corner of the play's brutal psychosexual universe. Gail Strickland, who plays his wife (and enemy), is irritatingly difficult to understand—get out your ear trumpet. Angela Bettis, as the unhappy couple's daughter, brings just the right amount of creepy coyness to her part. Directed by Clifford Williams. (Reviewed in our issue of 1/29/96.) (Roundabout, Broadway at 45th St. 869-8400. Closes Feb. 25.)

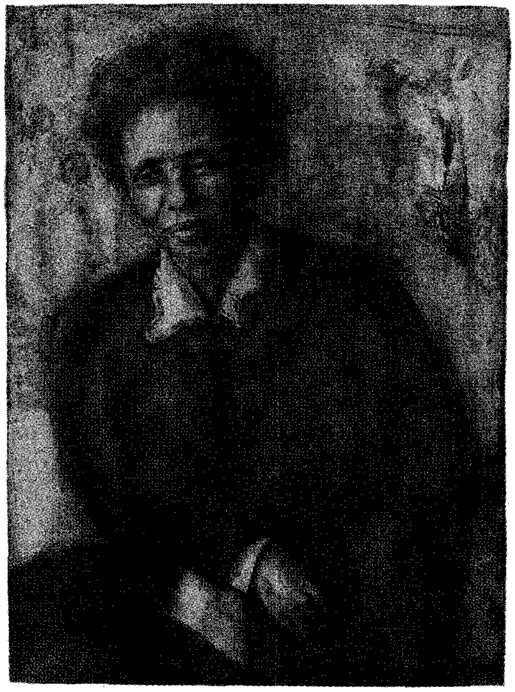
The Flying Monkeys—The improv troupe. Feb. 21 at 7:30. (Don't Tell Mama, 343 W. 46th St. 757-0788.)

The Food Chain—The situations in Nicky Silver's play are familiar and sitcom-ish, but the writing is tangy and memorably funny, and the actors—especially Phyllis Newman, as a long-suffering Jewish matron whose idea of listening is to talk—give smart, wonderfully fresh performances. Robert Falls directed. (9/11/95) (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 307-4100.)

The Grey Zone—Tim Blake Nelson's disjointed but shockingly powerful story of the *Sonderkommandos*—Jews who worked in the gas chambers and crematoria of the death camps—in a nearly flawless production. Among the finest components are Douglas Hughes's assured direction, David Van Tieghem's eerie, evocative sound design, and Gus Rogerson's blistering performance as one of the organizers of a rebellion. (MCC, 120 W. 28th St. 727-7765.)

Master Class—Zoe Caldwell portrays Maria Callas with steely, divaesque conviction in Terrence McNally's latest play, but the role is merely the sum of all the clichés that have been in circulation for years; the Callas who was a consummate professional and an inspired teacher—and a human being—is missing. Leonard Foglia directed. (11/27/95) (Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Mrs. Klein—Two London psychoanalysts—the famous Melanie Klein (Uta Hagen) and her less renowned daughter, Melitta (Laila Robins)—face off in a murderous argument and proceed to browbeat each other with theory in Nicholas Wright's smart though schematic drama. Robins is excellent; Hagen is brilliant. (11/20/95) (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 239-6200.)



Adrienne Kennedy, the Signature Theatre Company's artist-in-residence.

Molly Sweeney—Brian Friel's 1994 play owes much to an Oliver Sacks case study, but Friel didn't reimagine the material, and the play, which he directed, comes across as a staged reading of an essay. The three actors—Catherine Byrne, as the blind Molly, Jason Robards, as the doctor who hopes to make her see again, and Alfred Molina, as Molly's foolish, blustery husband—sit or stand and address the audience, and they all end up overexplaining themselves. (1/29/96) (Laura Pels, Broadway at 45th St. 869-8400.)

Moon Over Buffalo—Ken Ludwig's backstage farce is as forgettable as Carol Burnett is not: our reigning red-headed queen of comedy is delightful to behold. Tom Moore directed. (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

North 17th Street—A dream play by Clay Goss, about a sleepwalking preadolescent boy. (Harold Clurman, 412 W. 42nd St. 594-2370. Closes March 3.)

Picasso at the Lapin Agile—Steve Martin's comedy, set in a Paris bar in 1904, features Einstein and Picasso sittin' around talkin' about how they're going to change the world, and it contains a satisfying amount of Martin's coolly absurdist humor—but there's a certain sourness to the proceedings which may put you off. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 239-6200.)

Rent—Puccini's "La Bohème" was the inspiration for the late Jonathan Larson's rock opera, which is set in a gray and dishevelled East Village loft space and which stands every assumption of the traditional musical on its head. The characters include an H.I.V.-positive straight couple, a pair of lesbian lovers, a drag queen, a teacher, and a would-be filmmaker; with a combination of gravity and grace, Larson uncovers the poignance in their panic. No through-sung musical could support such narrative overload (eight separate stories are told), yet by the end of the evening Larson's talent has taken the audience to places where the musical never ventures these days. (2/19/96) (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 460-5475. Closes March 3.)

The Universe—In Richard Foreman's latest mind-wrenching vaudeville, three cheerfully desperate oddballs (James Urbaniak, Tony Torn, and Mary McBride) attempt to discover universal truths, behave normally, and find love in a thoroughly unknowable, abnormal, and inhospitable world. As usual, Foreman encumbers his actors with a funhouse set and delightfully unwieldy props. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 533-4650.)

Victor/Victoria—Julie Andrews, Tony Roberts, and Michael Nouri star in a theatrical version of the 1982 movie. The score (by Henry Mancini) is generic, and the book (by Blake Edwards, who also directed) is patchwork. The leggy Rachel York, as a blond bimbo, at least enjoys herself—and the audience enjoys her, too. (11/20/95) (Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100.)

Virgins and Other Myths—Colin Martin's one-man show—a sort of "This Gay Boy's Life"—is an explicit though graceful dive into the depths of his own psyche. He shuttles between a chronological narrative and psychological milestones in his life, now and then stopping to wonder just when it was, exactly, that he lost his virginity. (Primary Stages, 354 W. 45th St. 333-4052. Closes Feb. 25.)

The Winter's Tale—The Pearl Theatre's static staging of Shakespeare's late tragicomedy lacks the unifying vision of the recent Bergman and Royal Shakespeare Company imports; it doesn't bring much more to the May-December marriage of Bohemia and Sicilia than an oddly cast hodgepodge of bland actors. Director Kathryn Long seems intent on showing off the play's disunities and incongruities, but even if this really is her aim, she pulls it off with none of the exuberance, however infuriating, of so much postmodern stagecraft. This production feels more like staid suburban theatre than like rowdy urban theatre. (80 St. Marks Pl. 598-9802. Closes March 16.)

Working Class—Almost every one of the eight laborers that Richard Hoehler portrays in his one-man show is disenchanted; he aims to put humble yet heroic faces on the nation's workers, but he barely penetrates the experience of his subjects, leaving their personalities as sketchy as the category "working class" itself. (Mint, 311 W. 43rd St. 315-9434.)

The Yiddish Trojan Women—Three strong-willed Jewish women and their Polish refugee grandmother suffer the consequences of personal and political choices in the Age of Reagan. Playwright Carol Braverman extends Arthur Miller's brand of moral realism with meaty, intelligent female roles. Although the energy flags at times, the performances are accomplished and well balanced. (American Jewish Theatre, 307 W. 26th St. 633-9797. Closes Feb. 25.)

LONG RUNS

AFTER-PLAY: Theatre Four, 424 W. 55th St. 239-6200. . . . **BEAUTY AND THE BEAST:** Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4100. . . . **BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES:** Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370. . . . **CATS:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200. . . . **DEATH DEFYING ACTS:** Variety Arts, Third Ave. at 14th St.

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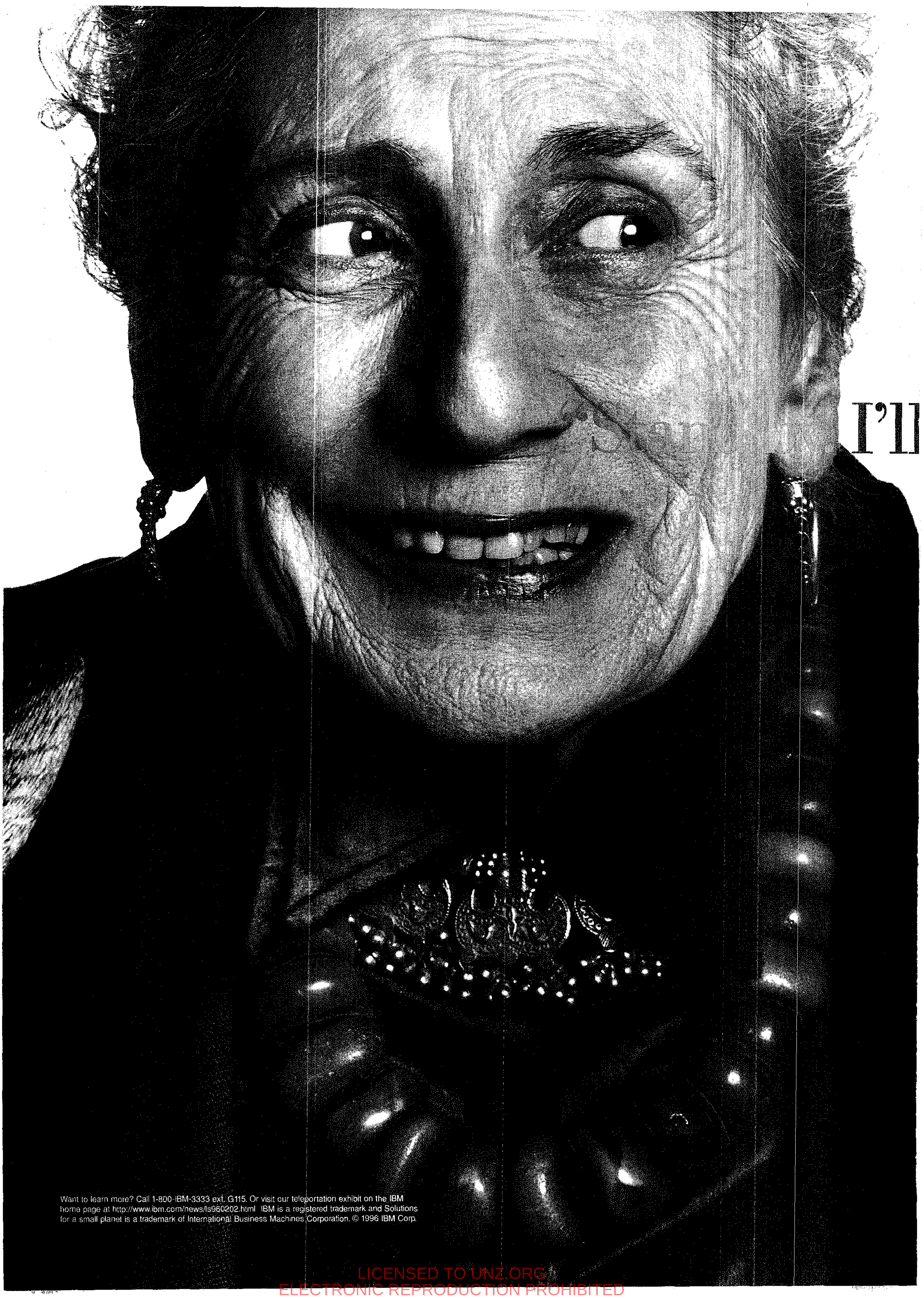

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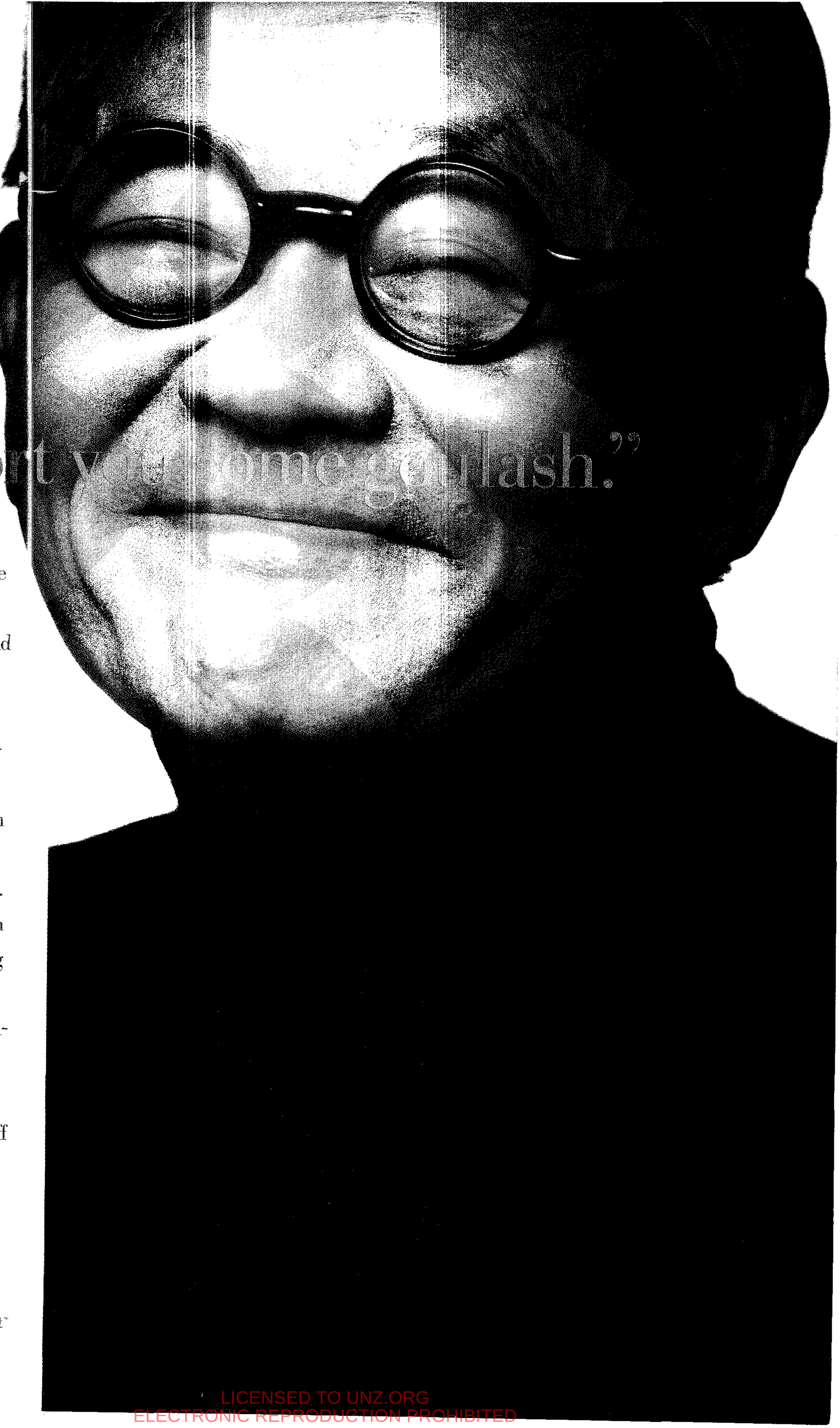

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239-6200. (Closes Feb. 25.). . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838. . . . **GRANDMA SYLVIA'S FUNERAL:** SoHo Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 691-1555. . . . **GREASE!:** Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200. . . . **HOW TO SUCCEED IN BUSINESS WITHOUT REALLY TRYING:** Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 307-4100. . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **MISS SAIGON:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200. . . . **PARTY:** Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-4321. . . . **PERFECT CRIME:** Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401. . . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **ROB BECKER'S DEFENDING THE CAVEMAN:** Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 307-4100. . . . **SHOW BOAT:** Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 307-4100. . . . **SMOKEY JOE'S CAFÉ:** Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200. . . . **STOMP:** Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at St. Marks Pl. 477-2477. . . . **SUNSET BOULEVARD:** Minskoff, 45th St. west of Broadway. 307-4007. . . . **TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING:** St. John's Church, 81 Christopher St. 279-4200.

DANCE

NEW YORK CITY BALLET—Final performances of the winter season. Feb. 21 at 8: "Swan Lake," "Behind the China Dogs," and "The Four Seasons." . . . ¶ Feb. 22 at 8 and Feb. 24 at 2: "Coppélia." . . . ¶ Feb. 23 at 8: "The Goldberg Variations" and "The Four Seasons." . . . ¶ Feb. 24 at 8: "Swan Lake," "Behind the China Dogs," "Glazunov Pas de Deux," and "Symphony in Three Movements." . . . ¶ Feb. 25 at 3: "Touch," "Opus 19/The Dreamer," and "Symphony in C." (New York State Theatre. 870-5570.)

FELD BALLETS/NY—Feb. 21 and March 2 at 8: "Harbinger," "Kore," "With Dew Upon Their Feet," and "Ludwig Gambits." . . . ¶ Feb. 22-23 and March 5 at 8, and Feb. 25 at 4: "Consort," "Chi," "Charmed Lives," and "Paean" (première) . . . . ¶ Feb. 24 at 2 and Feb. 25 at noon, both family matinées: "Hello Fancy," "The Envelope," "Three Commedia Dances," "Sleep Study," and "Half Time." . . . ¶ Feb. 24 and Feb. 27 at 8: "La Vida," "Clave," "Gnossiennes," and "The Jig Is Up." . . . ¶ Feb. 28-29 at 8: "The Grand Canon," "Santa Fe Saga," "Asia," and "Doo Dah Day." . . . ¶ March 1 at 8 and March 3 at 4: "Ah Scarlatti," "Ion," "Ogive," and "Paper Tiger" (première). . . . ¶ March 2 at 2 and March 3 at noon, both family matinées: "La Vida," "Meshugana Dance," an untitled première, and "The Jig Is Up." (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Through March 31.)

"MY FEET ARE KILLING ME"—There must be a certain torture to dancing a piece in which every beat is counted ferociously ("Your entrance is on the *forty-third* twelve"), and that's only one of the factors contributing to the manic hilarity of David Parker's choreography. Parker has mapped out a territory where the classical is pushed until it bleeds into the vulgar, but his work retains a sense of beauty even in the ridiculous. Of this program's title trio he says, "This is the first dark piece I've done; it's about the paradox of being grandiose and humble at the same time—making a fuss about being humble." In the solo "Hindlegs," Jeffrey Kazin evolves from a dog into a toe-tapper, one of those kitschy ballerinas from the thirties who had taps on their toe shoes. "It may not be the common view," Parker says, "but I think being a toe-tapper is about as high as you can go on the evolutionary scale." (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 674-8194. Feb. 22-25 at 8:30.)

BALÉ FOLCLÓRICO DA BAHIA—The twenty-two dancers, singers, and musicians from northern Brazil perform folkloric dances whose origins lie in candomblé rites. (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212. Feb. 23-24 at 8.)

NATIONAL BALLET OF SPAIN—The company appears in two programs: the first features traditional Spanish dances and José Granero's "Medea"; and the second, starting March 5, a selection of bolero, zapateado, tango, tablao, and ballet works. (City Center. Feb. 27-March 1 and March 5 at 8, March 2 at 2 and 8, and March 3 at 3. Through March 10.)

CHINESE FOLK DANCE COMPANY—The New York-based troupe blends acrobatics, Peking opera, martial arts, and traditional Chinese dance. (Tribeca Performing Arts Center, 199 Chambers St. 346-8510. Feb. 24 at 7:30.)

CUBAN NATIONAL FOLKLORIC DANCE ENSEMBLE—In country dances from the nineteenth century; Santeria rituals dedicated to Yemaya, goddess of the sea; and an *apalancado*, danced in the hope of escape from captivity. (Whitman Hall, Brooklyn Center for the Performing Arts, Brooklyn College. 1-718 951-4500. Feb. 24 at 8 and Feb. 25 at 2.)

I GIULLARI DI PIAZZA—The troupe performs "The Dance of the Ancient Spider"—a re-creation of Mediterranean trance-induced erotic writhings from the eleventh century, designed to extirpate the side effects of spider bites—accompanied by oud, *mandocello*, and *chitarra battente*, among other period instruments. (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5050. March 2 at 8.)

JOHN PASSAFIUME DANCERS—The company, led by the Paul Sansardo protégé, dances "Russian Romances" to selections from Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninoff sung by members of the Glimmmerglass Opera. With "Eclipse," set to poetry by Marco North. (Rose Penthouse, Lincoln Center. 627-8627. Feb. 22-24 at 8 and Feb. 25 at 3.)

"DOT . . . DOT"—Amy Sue Rosen and Derek Bernstein set their dancers on a polka-dotted floor for the title piece and on a runway of two hundred rocks for "Boulder," in a program of choreography that explores surfaces. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie. Feb. 29-March 3 at 8:30.)

"JYNXED"—Choreographer Lynn Shapiro has used her dancers' tales of curses, coincidences, and bad luck to create the program's title work. With "Charades" and "Mother's Garden." (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 924-0077. Feb. 22-24 at 8 and Feb. 25 at 3.)

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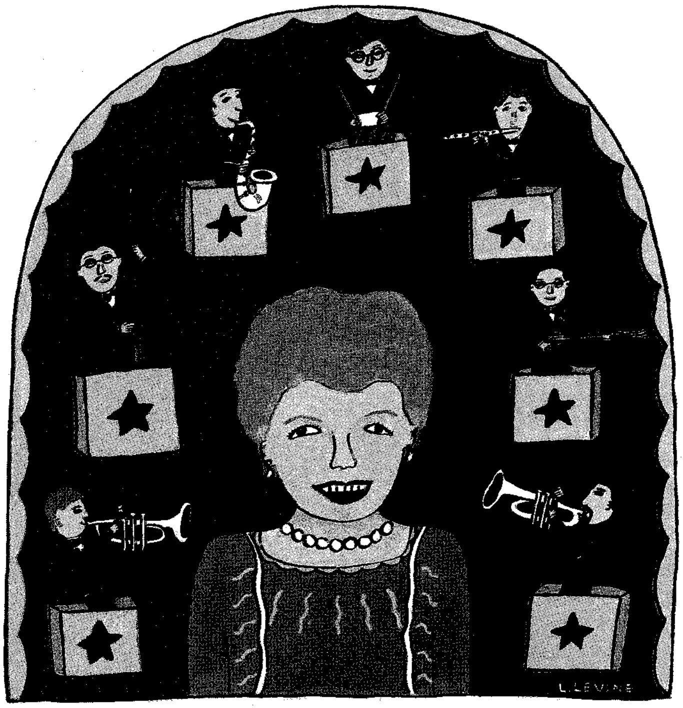
NIGHT LIFE

Rosemary and Time

Rosemary Clooney once said, "Singing is the only thing I've done all my life. I've had lots of boyfriends, one husband, five children, small houses, big houses—but singing is the one constant." When Carter Harman wrote his cover story on her for *Time*, in 1953, she had a beautiful, lilting voice—a voice as pure as Judy Garland's when she sang "Over the Rainbow" in "The Wizard of Oz." Now, keeping the dogs of age at bay, she has tightened her vibrato, shortened her long notes, and dropped to a contralto. Her diction, always clear, has become crystalline, and she has moved behind the beat and turned into—what else?—a jazz singer. Listen to the way she effortlessly rocks "We're in the Money" and "Limehouse Blues" and "Will You Still Be Mine?" on her new CD, "Dedicated to Nelson" (Concord). Better still, go up to Rainbow & Stars, where she is making her eighth annual pilgrimage, and listen to her sing the same songs in the flesh, a cool, breathing Maillol. She has generally brought a jumping small band with her, but this year she's backed by a big band playing the ingenious, obbligatolike arrangements Nelson Riddle wrote for her in the fifties. It's a matchless combination.



Rosemary Clooney, at Rainbow & Stars.

CONCERTS

Ray Davies—With the possible exception of The Who's Pete Townshend, Davies is the first British Invasion rocker to segue gracefully into middle age. Last year he put the Kinks on hiatus and released a wonderful quasi-autobiography called "X-Ray" (written in the third person, with a protagonist called R.D.) and embarked on a book tour that turned out to be a solo acoustic gig interspersed with a handful of lively readings. Now the fifty-one-year-old Rock and Roll Hall of Fame inductee is back with "20th Century Man," a fleshed-out theatrical version of the acoustic book tour. The flesh consists of two acts, stage and lobby trimmings, and a parlor-piano player—"Barnum & Bailey stuff," according to Davies. Far more influential than he's usually credited with being (even Townshend admits that he stole from the Kinks), this great songwriter should be as incorrigible as ever. (Westbeth Theatre Center, 151 Bank St. 741-0391. Feb. 21-23 at 7:30, Feb. 24 at 6:30 and 10, and Feb. 25 at 7:30.)

Bob Seger / John Hiatt—Seger has been singing about the blue-collar life (and the Vietnam War, among other unpopular topics) since the late sixties. Although his latest album, "It's a Mystery," hasn't yielded any hits, his working-man material still resonates for some; these are the folks for whom, in concert, he remains the lionhearted road warrior he's always been for them. / While critics have been singing Hiatt's praise for decades, it's been mostly country artists who've turned his rootsy songs into hits. His new mandolin-driven album, "Walk On," is full of tunes that dissect modern life with the twin Hiatt trademarks—intelligence and wit. (Madison Square Garden. 465-6000. Feb. 21 at 8.)

"Cool Jazz, Bop, & Swing"—The musical bases of mainstream jazz are pretty well covered at this grand meeting of affable improvisers. Along with the robust baritone sax of Cecil Payne, this grab-bag gig features one of the most resourceful trombonists of the past half century, Eddie Bert. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd. 840-2824. Feb. 23 at 8.)

Morton, Monk, and Marsalis—Sure, it's the usual suspects—in this case, Jelly Roll, Thelonious, and Wynton—but what's Lincoln Center here for, anyway? Marsalis's celebrated septet, with its two-sax, trombone, and trumpet front line (and clarinettist Dr. Michael White), is back; the group blends the heft of a big band with the velocity of a compact ensemble. For Marsalis to place his own compositions alongside the work of Morton and Monk is either hubris or (more likely) further proof of his status as the all-or-nothing king of contemporary jazz. (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5050. Feb. 24 at 8.)

"Lyrics & Lyricists"—The long-running musical series tackles the songs of Leonard Bernstein. (92nd St. Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100. Feb. 25-26 at 2 and 8.)

Mandy Patinkin—The best American popular singers of the twenties—from Ethel Waters to Bing Crosby—broke out of the confines of the quasi-operatic tradition and taught the country how to swing. Patinkin seems to have missed out on all that. Despite his dramatic pauses, his casual clothing, and his impressive array of facial expressions, he still sounds like a member of the original cast of a Victor Herbert musical. His new record, "Oscar and Steve," features gorgeous arrangements by some really heavy cats, but Patinkin comes off like an Irish tenor with a sort of Mad Hatter dementia reminiscent of Jerry Colonna. (Westbury Music Fair, 1-516 334-0800. Feb. 27 at 8 and March 3 at 7.)

The Ramones—They are the undisputed founding fathers of punk (they beat the Sex Pistols into the record shops by a year), but the Ramones' failure to capture the hearts and wallets of the Green Day generation has finally broken their once unbreakable spirit—the band's long-rumored retirement is official. It's a pity that Joey and Johnny couldn't patent that two-minute omelette of angst, ennui, and alienation in 1976. Not that they didn't try. It could be said that younger fans grew tired of the band's inability to vary its formula, or of its slightly old-fashioned abuses of grammar, posture, and the penal code, but that would be nit-picking. In the end, this is—and will always be remembered as—a wonderful, seminal rock band. (Academy, 234 W. 43rd St. 307-7171. Feb. 29 at 8)

Mike Scott—"Bring 'Em All In," the new solo album by the former leader of the great Scottish folk-rock band the Waterboys, is closer in spirit to "Fisherman's Blues" (1988), the band's expert mix of mandolins, fiddles, and songcraft, than to "Dream Harder," its abysmal final album. Scott spent the past year and a half in a spiritual community in the northeast of Scotland, and he comes off a bit New Age here, but the feeling of rejuvenation is infectious. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400. March 2 at 8.)

Luther Vandross—There's no doubt that he's a great singer, but his taste has always been suspect; his last record, "Songs," sounded like happy hour at the Holiday Inn. To hear him wrap his hot larynx around cold leftovers like "Killing Me Softly," "Endless Love," and "The Impossible Dream" is to wonder, Why, Luther, why? (Westbury Music Fair. March 5 at 8.)

CLUBS

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type indicates some of the more notable performers in town. Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it is advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.)

Bottom Line, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—Decent sight lines, great greasy food, prodigiously talented waitresses, and a consistent roster of high-quality acts. Now in his seventies, flat-picking master **Doc Watson** (March 1) is the same avatar of American roots music that he was when folklorist Ralph Rinzler discovered him back in 1960. His latest album, "Docabilly," finds him breezing through songs by Elvis, Johnny Cash, and the Everly Brothers.

Chicago B.L.U.E.S., 73 Eighth Ave., at 13th St. (924-9755)—Dedicated to the music of the Windy City. Feb. 23-24: **Guitar Shorty.**

Fez, 380 Lafayette St. (533-7000)—Feb. 21: **Seamus Egan.** This former boy wonder—at fourteen, he won the prestigious All-Ireland championships on four different instruments: flute, tin whistle, mandolin, and banjo—is, at twenty-six, a ripe old master. His soundtrack to the film "The Brothers McMullen" was an unexpected hit, and his impressive new album, "When Juniper Sleeps," finds him pushing the Celtic-music envelope ever further. Feb. 23: The **Health and Happiness Show,** a sprightly band led by ex-Bongo James Mastro which blends country, folk, and rock. With **Splendora,** an elegantly noisy all-female quintet led by sisters Janet and Tricia Wygal, which recently released a delightful début album called "In the Grass." Feb. 27: **Professor and Maryanne.** This impossibly precocious Staten Island duo has chosen its name with remarkable acuity. Like their "Gilligan's Island" namesakes, they balance the cerebral (courtesy of guitarist-songwriter Ken Rockwell) with dark good looks (from helium-throated singer Danielle Brancaccio). Their new record, "Lead Us Not Into Penn Station," includes a few tracks that depart from their standard guitar-and-voice format (and feature a few members of Joe Jackson's band) and one song, "Just One Night," that could actually make them famous. Dining.

Irving Plaza, 17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—Feb. 24: **God Lives Underwater.** March 1: **Koko Taylor.** In 1966, this tornado of a singer shook the rafters of Chicago's fabled Chess Records studios with "Wang Dang Doodle," her classic duet with Willie Dixon. As the reigning Queen of the Blues, she's won more W. C. Handy Awards than any other female blues performer—and, at sixty, she can still shake loose a rafter or two. With the **Holmes Brothers,** who have it all: blues, soul, gospel, R. & B., and country, along with a poise that lends the mix an authority that younger, looser groups can't touch. . . . ¶ The Swing Dance Society gathers here every Sunday,

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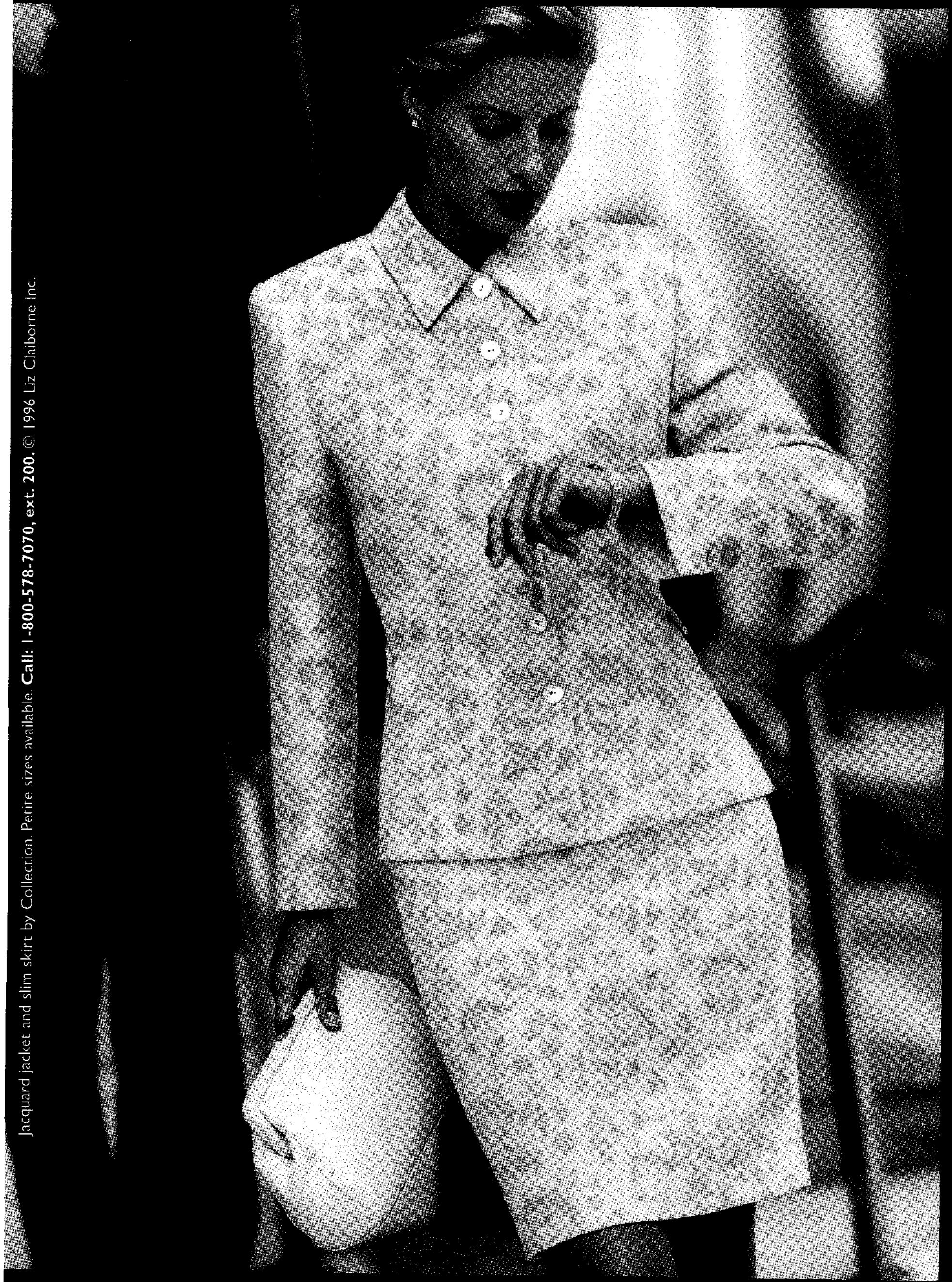

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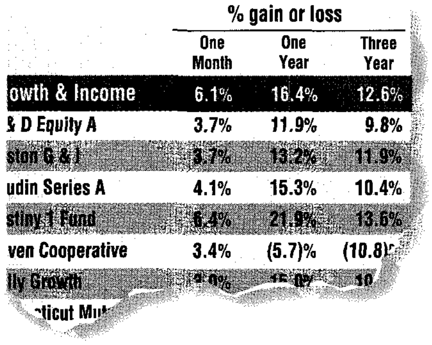

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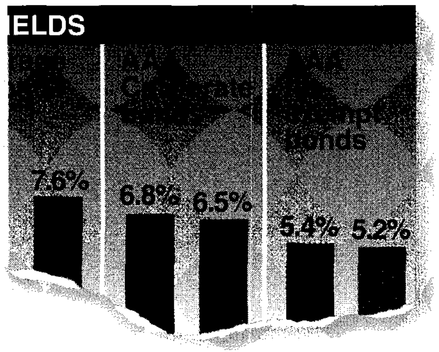

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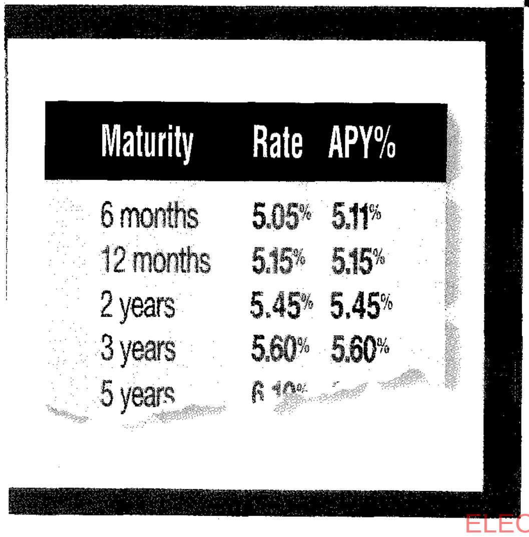

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12 months	5.15%	5.15%
2 years	5.45%	5.45%
3 years	5.60%	5.60%
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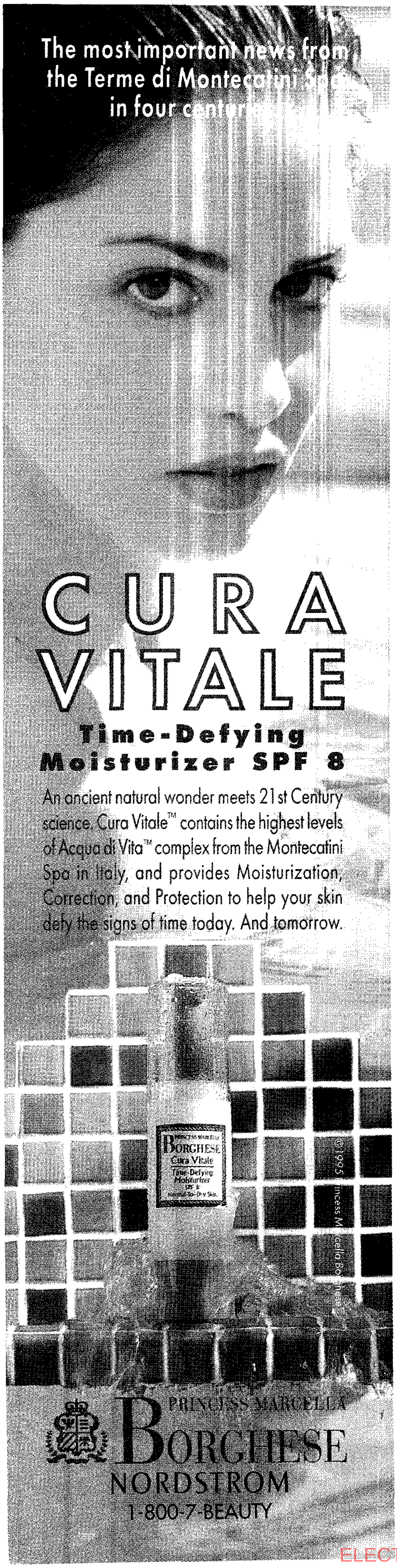
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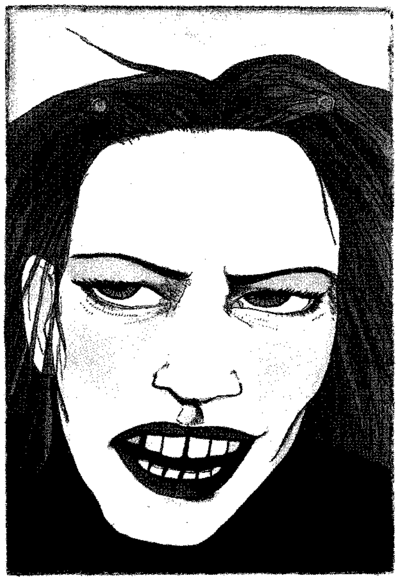
Knitting Factory, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—**DIAMANDA GALAS** ululates on Feb. 21 and Feb. 23. Lounge rock with **LARS VEGAS** on Feb. 3.

Maxwell's, 1039 Washington St., Hoboken (1-201 798-4064)—Feb. 24: **JOHN WESLEY HARDING.** It may be tough to be saddled with the "Elvis Costello, Jr.," tag for your entire career, but Harding should be thankful for the compliment: though he's written a few clever songs, nothing he's done has ever reached the level of Costello's musicianship and wordplay. The title of his latest release, "John Wesley Harding's New Deal," refers to his new contract with Forward/Rhino, which apparently frees him from the pressures of sprucing his folky pop songs into the hits that a major label might require. March 1: **G. LOVE** (of Special Sauce) plays a solo acoustic show.

Mercury Lounge, 217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—Feb. 21: Rock, Native American style, with **RED THUNDER.** Feb. 22: **RUBY.** As frontwoman for the British punk band Silverfish, Lesley Rankine was responsible for such delicately crafted tunes as "Die" and "Total Fucking Asshole." Two years later, this blue-haired Scot replaced her screaming with singing and reinvented herself as the modish, smoky-voiced Ruby. The new persona would seem contrived if "Salt Peter," her début album, weren't so good. With collaborator Mark (Pigface) Walk, she's assembled a bracing trip-hop collection that fairly shouts, "Move over, Björk!" Feb. 26: Transplanted British guitarist **FRANCIS DUNNERY** has employed a novel setup during his recent "residencies" at small clubs: acoustic guitar and laptop—the better to remember freshly written lyrics. With his anchor plunked down here for a month of Mondays, he's likely to be working through a new batch of songs in progress. Let's hope they're as quirky and absorbing as the ones on his recent album, "Tall Blonde Helicopter."



Ruby, at the Mercury Lounge.

LARA TOMLIN

Les Poulets, 16 W. 22nd St. (229-2000)—The name may be French, but the music here is Latin: expect salsa, merengue, and, now and then, a cha-cha. Dining.

S.O.B.'s, 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—A great grass hut with a fruit-and-bamboo motif, dedicated to calypso, reggae, and the bossa nova. Dining.

Tramps, 51 W. 21st St. (727-7788)—Feb. 23-24: A little après-Mardi Gras fun with **BUCKWHEAT ZYDECO.** Feb. 27: The Hightone Records Roadhouse Revival Tour. A night of radical country mayhem, with a few all-stars from Oakland's hippest independent record label. Featuring former Blasters leader **DAVE ALVIN,** honky-tonk purist **DALE WATSON,** boogie-woogie revivalist **REVEREND BILLY C. WIRTZ,** barroom balladeer **BUDDY MILLER,** and roots rockers **BIG SANDY & HIS FLY-RITE BOYS.**

Webster Hall, 125 E. 11th St. (353-1600)—A byzantine disco wonderland with four floors, a coffee shop, and a wig boutique. Wednesday is drag night. Psychedelic Thursdays feature grunge acts and cheap beer.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

Algonquin Hotel, 59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—Just after the first song of his good-natured, swinging set, guitarist and vocalist **JOHN PIZZARELLI** (through March 2) tells the crowd how great it is to be back in the hippest jazz room in New York: "I hear Charlie Parker used to hang out here." His brother Martin, the bassist, whispers something in his ear. "Oh, wait. That was Dorothy Parker—well, she was hip, too." Pizzarelli's brand of impudent goofiness brings a fresh breeze to the stuffy old Oak Room, whose acts of late seem to have forgotten that they're in the unofficial birthplace of the great American smart-aleck. An agile musician and a pleasant low-key crooner from the Chet Baker/Alfalfa school, he is solidly backed by Ray Kennedy on piano, making this the best-sounding cabaret act in town. Dining.

Birdland, 2745 Broadway, at 105th St. (749-2228)—An airy two-tiered space with pastel walls and potted greenery. Feb. 23-24: James Lloyd. Dining.

Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Through Feb. 25: **BETTY CARTER** and her quartet. For this jazz diva, tempo is king. Nobody can shape a rhythm quite like Carter can; time contracts and expands like a Slinky, while phrases fall unexpectedly, with an utterly personal logic. Half the pleasure of a Carter show, of course, is checking out her band: alumni include the pianists John Hicks, Cyrus Chestnut, and Stephen Scott. Feb. 27-March 3: The Michael Camilo trio. Dining.

Bottom Line, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—Feb. 28-29: **JOHN MC LAUGHLIN AND FREE SPIRITS.** On "After the Rain," his 1995 tribute to John Coltrane, this guitarist (who is still best known as the leader of the Mahavishnu Orchestra) pulled off a deft homage to the organ-trio format of the sixties. (Of course, he had the great drummer Elvin Jones to help him out.) The Free Spirits tend to bash and grind while their fleet-fingered leader overcompensates like crazy. March 5: **GONG.**

Bradley's, 70 University Pl., at 11th St. (228-6440)—On any given night, and well into the morning, one or another of New York's many formidable pianists can be found here. Through Feb. 24: a trio featuring **DONALD BROWN** (piano), **JAVON JACKSON** (sax), and **IRA COLEMAN** (bass). Feb. 26-March 2: **JOHN HICKS** and **RAY DRUMMOND.** Intense, inventive, and garrulous, Hicks is a pianist who combines the harmonic daring and aggressive stance of McCoy Tyner with the romantic fluency of Roland Hanna—not a bad mix. When a drummer lays down the kind of shag carpet that Drummond regularly does, anything on top sounds good. Dining.

Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound pastel murals, and, through Feb. 21, the legendary **EARTHA KITT.** She is still a fierce and funny performer with a feral grip on her audience. At the end of a song she'll throw back her head and laugh, like some kind of carnivore after the kill; she chooses her victims from the front row, and when the show is over there's blood on the tables. **DIXIE CARTER** takes over on Feb. 22. . . .¶ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, **PETER MINTUN** is in attendance.

The Cooler, 416 W. 14th St. (229-0785)—A lavender and stainless-steel dungeon deep in the heart of the meat district. Feb. 23: **GRAHAM HAYNES.** This young trumpeter has something fresh on his mind. Sidestepping the "everything old is new again" routine of his peers, he keeps the mix eclectic: world music, funk, free-form; and he folds it all

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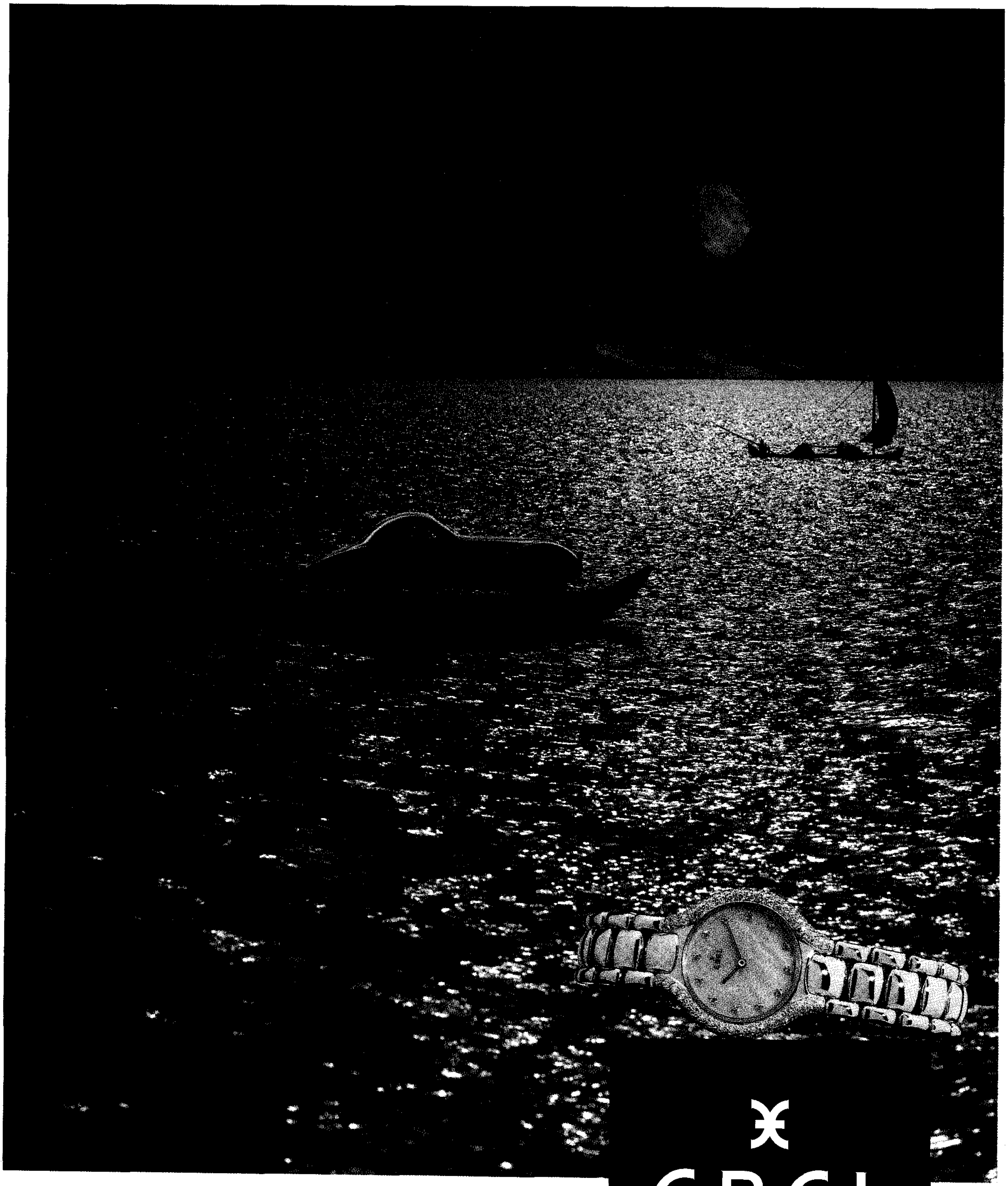

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into his lean and pungent horn lines. And, yes, he's drummer Roy's son.

Fifty Seven Fifty Seven, 57 E. 57th St. (758-5757)—A cool, sumptuous piano-and-bass room in the Four Seasons Hotel, with twenty-two-foot-high ceilings, a long backlit bar stocked with single-malt Scotch, and fine jazz seven nights a week. Dining.

Iridium, 44 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—Across the street from Lincoln Center, this restaurant and club features a handsome bar upstairs and a surreal performance space downstairs. Through Feb. 25: the **TERENCE BLANCHARD** quintet. As Spike Lee's Bernard Herrmann, Blanchard has turned in some vibrant and atmospheric scores (his latest is "Clockers"), but his capabilities as a jazz soloist aren't in danger of being overlooked—he's the best of the neo-Marsalis trumpeters, a thrilling virtuoso with a romantic streak. Feb. 27-March 3: **SLIDE HAMPTON AND THE JAZZ MASTERS.** The **JOHN SCOFIELD** quintet takes over on March 5.

Knickerbocker, 33 University Pl., at 9th St. (228-8490)—Brass rails, vintage posters, Hirschfeld drawings, and a piano. Through Feb. 24: a trio featuring Russell Malone, Norman Simmons, and Ray Drummond. Feb. 28-March 2: Piano and bass with Valerie Capers and John Robinson.

Rainbow & Stars, 30 Rockefeller Plaza (632-5000)—A plush, old-fashioned night club, sixty-five floors above it all, complete with Art Deco fixtures, intimate glitter, and a panoramic view as dizzying as the tab. **ROSEMARY CLOONEY** (see Concerts) swings and sings through Feb. 25. **LINDA LAVIN** begins a month-long run on March 5. . . . ¶ Across the hall, in the Rainbow Room, there's a revolving dance floor, plus big-band music courtesy of the Rainbow Room Orchestra, featuring vocalists Sean Mahony and Claudette Sierra. Closed Mondays.

Smalls, 183 W. 10th St. (929-7565)—The adept bassist **DWAYNE BURNO** (Feb. 29) appears with a very smart band: vibist Monte Croft, drummer Billy Drummond, pianist Renee Rosnes, and crafty saxophonist Myron Walden.

Tavern on the Green, Central Park W. at 67th St. (873-3200)—This legendary tourist haven makes serious jazz fans welcome in the Chestnut Room, which resembles a hunting lodge and is every bit as over-the-top as the rest of the establishment. The **ILLINOIS JACQUET BIG BAND** is currently in the midst of a two-week run. Now in his seventies, the tenor saxophonist is a journeyman survivor whose career highpoints include his famous solo on Lionel Hampton's recording of "Flying Home" and his screeching, stomping tenor battles in the fifties, as a member of Jazz at the Philharmonic. In 1983, he decided to put together a big band, and it has become a smooth, highly popular Basie-like combo, easy to dance to and most notable for its leader's sumptuous sound.

Village Vanguard, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—The world's most famous jazz club is also the last place in town that still looks, smells, and feels like a classic jazz club—subterranean, smoky, and thick with the spirits of past masters. Through Feb. 25: the **JACKY TERRASSON** trio. Terrasson is a defiantly eccentric pianist, the kind of bursting-at-the-seams talent who continually walks the line between daring jaunts of imagination and isn't-this-just-shocking mannerisms. Youthful mischief aside, he is definitely a comer, and he's developed a true trio sound. His fine new album is called "Reach." With the **KENNY BARRON** trio. Feb. 27-March 3: **HOLLY HOFMANN,** an excellent flutist, isn't a star—yet—but the members of her band sure are, particularly the majestic bassist Ray Brown, who's been missing from the Vanguard stage for longer than anyone can remember—his astounding tone will shake the walls. So will the presence of Victor Lewis (drums) and Kenny Barron (piano). The **VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA** holds sway on Mondays.

Visiones, 125 Macdougal St., at W. 3rd St. (673-5576)—A tiny, low-key supper club where the jazz, like the Spanish-American cuisine, can take on a spicy, multicultural flavor.

Zinno, 126 W. 13th St. (924-5182)—Through Feb. 24: Piano, guitar, and drums with John Bunch, Harry Allen, and Michael Moore. Dining.

ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St.—"Fabergé in America." In 1885, the warrant of "Supplier to the Imperial Court" was bestowed upon the House of Fabergé, and the rest is legend. The St. Petersburg jeweler and goldsmith Peter Carl Fabergé and his master craftsmen designed thousands of decorative objects and fantasy creations using such precious and semiprecious materials as colored gold, platinized silver, gems, malachite, ivory, and lapis lazuli. The most celebrated by far are the imperial Easter eggs, commissioned first by Alexander III, for his czarina, and later by Nicholas II. Fifteen of the forty-four extant eggs can be found in this exhibit of works from American collections, which also includes more than four hundred baskets, vases, table clocks, cigarette boxes, and other delights. Through April 28. . . . ¶ "Poussin: Works on Paper." Sixty-five sketches and careful preparatory studies by the founder of French Classicism, from the collection of Queen Elizabeth II. Through March 31. . . . ¶ A complementary exhibit of seventeenth-century French drawings from the museum's collection is also on display. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St.—An installation of twenty-four Brancusi masterworks is on display; fourteen are from the Georges Pompidou Center, in Paris, the rest from MOMA's collection. Through April 23. . . . ¶ A large retrospective of black-and-white photographs from the late forties to the present by Roy DeCarava. Among the subjects are jazz musicians, street and subway life, and urban civil-rights protests. Through May 7. . . . ¶ Drawings, an architectural model, and documentary photographs provide an overview of the German designer Lilly Reich's work, which included several installations for clothing, housing, and building-materials expositions in the twenties and thirties. Through May 7. . . . ¶ "Sol LeWitt Prints, 1970-1995." Through May 7. . . . ¶ "Michael Schmidt: U-NI-TY," a hundred black-and-white photographs by the Berlin native. Through March 26. . . . ¶ The "Projects" series presents knitted and embroidered works by Oliver Herring and Leonilson. Through March 12. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, 11 to 6; Thursdays and Fridays, noon to 8:30.)

Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—"Abstraction in the Twentieth Century: Total Risk, Freedom, Discipline." A hundred and forty paintings and sculptures, with special sections on Kandinsky, Mondrian, Pollock, Rothko, Martin, Hesse, Serra, Puryear, and several others. Through May 12. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 10 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 10 to 8.)

Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St.—A retrospective of a hundred assemblages, constructed from scavenged street and flea-market materials, by Edward Kienholz (1927-94) and Nancy Reddin Kienholz. Starts Feb. 29. . . . ¶ "Joseph Cornell: Cosmic Travels." Box constructions and collages from the fifties and sixties by America's homegrown Surrealist. Through March 10. (Another show of Cornell's work is at C & M, 45 E. 78th St., through March 2.) (Open Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

American Museum of Natural History, Central Park W. at 79th St.—"Amber: Window to the Past." Since the Mesolithic Period (9000-6000 B.C.), human beings have carved amulets out of fossilized tree resin. But all sorts of things—butterflies, tree frogs, geckos—were getting stuck in amber at a considerably earlier date; the oldest known fossils (on view here) are entrapped in ninety-four-million-year-old amber from New Jersey. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Brooklyn Museum, Eastern Parkway—"A Slice of Schiaparelli: Surrealism in Fashion." Fifty examples of the stylish inspirations of Elsa

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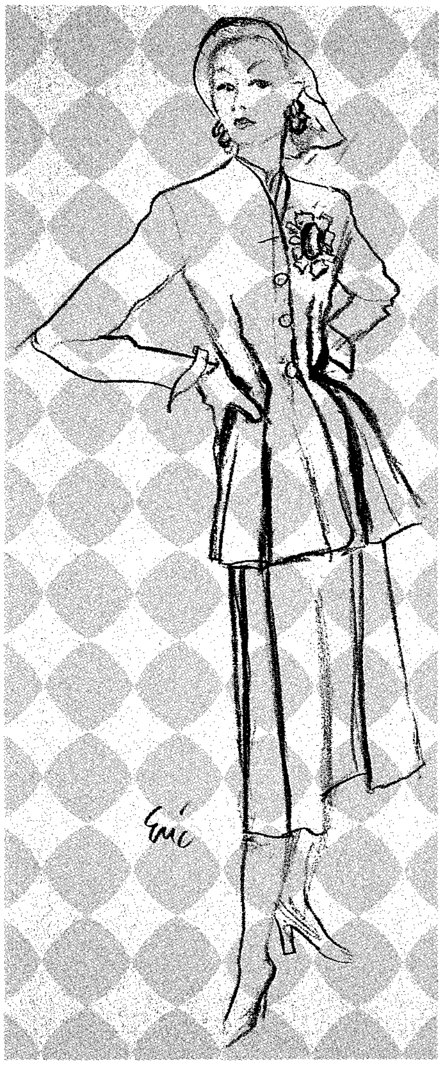
Schiaparelli (1890-1973): evening gloves with reptilian scales; a day suit with metallic ladybugs, grasshoppers, and cockroaches creeping across it; a hat of celluloid grapes; and more. Through March 24. . . . ¶ Human figures rise out of root and boulder shapes in Alison Saar's sculptures "Tree Souls" and "Stone Souls." (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

Dia Center for the Arts, 548 W. 22nd St.—"Your Skin in This Weather Bourne Eye-Threads & Swollen Perfume" is the title of Jessica Stockholder's rambling, ramshackle installation, which utilizes (among *many* other things) hot-pink carpet, lime-green linoleum, purple milk crates, and a tumescent heap of stuffed shirts. Through June 23. . . . ¶ "Atlas," Gerhard Richter's superbly enigmatic installation of more than six hundred large panels mounted with thousands of photographs. Through Feb. 29. . . . ¶ "European Couples, and Others," a selection of fluorescent-light sculptures from 1964 to 1978 by Dan Flavin. Through June 23. (Open Thursdays through Sundays, noon to 6.)



An Eric sketch for a 1946 Hattie Carnegie ad in Vogue *(F.I.T.).*

Fashion Institute of Technology, Seventh Ave. at 27th St.—The Carnegie look was *it* between the wars. Tallulah, Marlene, Joan, the Duchess of Windsor, and Mrs. William Randolph Hearst were among the devotees of fashion designer Hattie Carnegie (née Henrietta Kanengeiser) and her understated elegance. Suits, evening dresses, WAC uniforms, and bridal gowns are on view, along with accessories, design sketches, and photographs. Through April 27. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, noon to 8, and Saturdays, 10 to 5.)

Morgan Library, 29 E. 36th St.—"A Great Heritage" comprises a hundred and three of the best sheets in the Duke of Devonshire's drawing collection and includes some of the greatest drawings by Leonardo, Raphael, Rembrandt, and Rubens. Through April 21. . . . ¶ "The Art of the Brontës," a fascinating roomful of drawings, manuscripts, and juvenilia by Anne, Charlotte, Emily, and their brother, Branwell, as well as some of their personal effects. Through April 14. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, 10:30 to 5; Saturdays, 10:30 to 6; Sundays, noon to 6.)

Museum of the City of New York, Fifth Ave. at 104th St.—"The Talk of the Town: Rea Irvin of *The New Yorker.*" Irvin (1881-1972) was Harold Ross's first hire, and what a move that was. He created Eustace Tilley, logos and fonts for the headings, the wavy rule, and the misperception that the magazine was a solid venture that had been around for years. Eighty-three covers and drawings are on view, most of them from the artist's personal collection, which he donated to the museum in 1967. Through May 5. . . . ¶ "Growing Up in New York: The Photography of Arthur Leipzig." Through March 31. (Open Wednesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5; Sundays, 1 to 5.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.)

A. R. Penck—"Nudes and Bronzes," a selection of sculptures and works on paper from the past twenty years. In the last decade, this leading German neo-expressionist's reputation here has dwindled to the point that current gallery-goers might be completely unfamiliar with his work; this show should return him to the fore. The works on paper, mainly nudes, suggest primitivism as well as modernism and are self-consciously rough—almost brutal—in their execution, with the exception of a suite of gouaches depicting the artist's pregnant lover, which shimmer with volatile, psychedelic color. The bronzes are all post-1980, the year that Penck finally emigrated from East Germany; they, too, display a wide range of affinities, from Brancusi to Bourgeois to Smith. Through March 9. (Werner, 21 E. 67th St. Open Mondays.)

Milton Resnick / Jean-Michel Basquiat (1960-1988)—Five big, deep, beautiful paintings with the same title, "U & Me," by a master abstractionist, now eighty years old, who has turned to mythopoeic figuration. Ghastly, shadowy figures, like reimagined Munch phantasms, flutter and flail beneath elemental trees and lowering skies, all rendered in rich, sombre impasto. An important show. / More doodles by the boy wonder—the sort of thing that will be liked by people who like that sort of thing. Through March 9. (Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St.)

Burton Silverman—Recent oil paintings by an artist who illustrated Profiles for this magazine for thirty years. Through March 9. (Wunderlich, 50 W. 57th St.)

"The French Portrait: 1550-1850"—An extraordinary exhibition including splendid work by Clouet, Nattier, Fragonard, Greuze, David, Courbet, and many others. The indisputable highlight (and one of the highlights of the season) is Ingres's recently rediscovered portrait of Caroline Murat, Napoléon's sister, who was, briefly, Queen of Naples, where the artist executed the painting in 1814. It disappeared the following year and was presumed lost until 1988, when the artist's signature was discovered on a canvas undergoing a thorough cleaning and the portrait was recognized as the famous lost Ingres. The subject appears in a black gown and hat (she was probably in mourning for the Empress Josephine), with a smoking Vesuvius in the background—a seeming augury of impending misfortune. Since the painting remains in private hands, this is a rare opportunity to see it. Through Feb. 24. (Colnaghi, 21 E. 67th St. Open Mondays.)

"The House Transformed"—A wide-ranging exhibit that turns up some fine work: a Joel Shapiro sculpture so tiny that you might step on it by accident; a classy pair of altered photographs by the ubiquitous Gerhard Richter; a witty wire-mesh construction by H. C. Westermann; a handsome architectural study by Richard Artschwager; and, best of all, a stunning photograph by Peter Garfield of a "mobile" home flying through a night sky—an updated Auntie Em's farmhouse. Through March 2. (Mathes, 41 E. 57th St.)

"The Human Body in Contemporary American Sculpture"—An eclectic group show that by no means focusses on obviously figural work, although Duane Hanson's "Weightlifter" (1990) is probably its cynosure and Eric Fischl's Rodinoid bronze "Woman Bending" (1995) is certainly its nadir. Bruce Nauman's "Various Materials Separated by Layers of Grease with Holes the Size of My Waist and Wrists" (1966) is here, and so is the camera that Chris Burden used in his performance "Movie on the Way Down" (1973)—of which the artist later wrote, "Wearing no clothes, I was suspended by my feet with a rope tied to a ceiling crossbeam. . . . I held a running movie camera pointed at the floor. . . . I crashed to the floor, got up, dressed and left." Through March 2. (Gagosian, 980 Madison Ave., at 76th St.)

"New York Folk"—New York City has produced its share of self-taught visionaries, too. This well-curated, well-annotated exhibit of paintings by Lawrence Lebduska (1894-1966), Abraham Levin (1880-1957), and Israel Litwak (1868-1960) brims with fantastic invention and exuberant fun. In one of Lebduska's imaginary landscapes, pandas frolic in a pastoral countryside that looks a lot like Connecticut. Levin, who was born in Russia, paints scenes of village life with an intense vision and a sophisticated palette that suggest Chagall. Litwak's fussily detailed architectural studies have a distinctly postmodernist banality. Through March 16. (Galerie St. Etienne, 24 W. 57th St.)

Group Show—A well-chosen (if irritating) survey of recent conceptual works that utilize photographic technology. Juan Downey has set up a circle of eight video monitors showing, at staggered intervals, two nine-minute tapes of a Yanomami Indian poling his pirogue down a Venezuelan bayou. Alfredo Jaar's repetitive photographs of a smiling Vietnamese girl are so utterly bland that it hardly seems to matter that she's in a detention camp. A 1988-89 work by Gary Hill, described by the gallery as "celebrated," shows the artist being reduced to a babbling lunatic wallowing in his own excrement as a text is projected in the background; it's revolting, but Hill has since produced such compelling work that you simply want to forget this one. The exhibit includes two large photographs, mysterious and haunting, by Angela Grauerholz, and one of Annette Messager's painted photographs. Through March 9. (Galerie Lelong, 20 W. 57th St.)

Short List—pierre bonnard, Wildenstein, 19 E. 64th St. Open Mondays; through March 23. . . . **andrás böröcz,** Baumgold, 128 E. 72nd St. Through March 9. . . . **richmond burton,** Marks, 1018 Madison Ave., at 79th St. Through March 2. . . . **vija celmins,** McKee, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. Through April 5. . . . **mary frank,** DC Moore, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. Through March 9. . . . **sidney goodman,** Dintenfass, 20 E. 79th St. Open Mondays; through March 2. . . . **adolph gottlieb,** Knoedler, 19 E. 70th St. Through March 9. . . . **dan graham,** Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. Open Mondays; through March 2. . . . **cleve gray,** Berry-Hill, 11 E. 70th St. Open Mondays; through March 2. . . . **john lees,** Hirschl & Adler Modern, 21 E. 70th St. Through March 23. . . . **andré masson,** Zabriskie, 41 E. 57th St. Through March 2. . . . **andrew masullo** (starts Feb. 22) and **keith haring** (starts Feb. 29), Emmerich, 41 E. 57th St. . . . **mimmo rotella,** Marisa del Re, 41 E. 57th St.

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GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

Ellen Gallagher—Subdued, rather sombre abstractions à la Agnes Martin—or at least that's the initial impression one gets from these works by a young painter who was one of the few genuine surprises at last year's Whitney Biennial. Closer inspection reveals something stranger going on: waves of smiling, thick-lipped mouths, cascades of eyeballs, even the occasional schematic rendering of a woman's head or a forlorn elephant complicate the paintings' sensuous, fussed-over surfaces. Through Feb. 24. (Boone, 417 West Broadway.)

Henryk Tomaszewski—A retrospective of posters by the maverick Polish graphic designer. Through March 1. (School of Visual Arts, 209 E. 23rd St. Open Mondays through Thursdays, 9 to 8; Fridays, 9 to 5.)

"Epitaphs"—Death on the installment plan, the art-world way: some thirty works on the themes of mourning and morbidity, which add up to a rewarding group show. Andy Warhol's "Self-Portrait with Skull" (1978) depicts a dour-looking artist with an oddly jaunty death's-head perched on his shoulder like a parrot. The most amusing piece may be John Coplans' "Letter to My Son" (1995), which begins flatly "This letter is about the disposal of my body after my death. . ." and continues, with hilariously detailed and persnickety instructions regarding his cremation and the scattering of his ashes, to its sardonic sign-off: "Good Luck!" Through March 2. (Thorp, 103 Prince St.)

"Model Home"—The Institute of Contemporary Art's Clocktower gallery reopens with this show, which was conceived as a living space in which visitors may coo and criticize, just like they do in other people's homes. Parts of every room, from bar to bath, are here, along with window treatments and swatches of wall, floor, and furniture coverings. Sarah Charlesworth, Robert Gober, Byron Kim, Frank Moore, Rona Pondick, Elaine Reichek, Lawrence Weiner, and Franz West are among the sixty artists involved. Through March 31. (108 Leonard St., between Broadway and Lafayette St. Open Thursdays and Fridays, 4 to 10; Saturdays and Sundays, 1 to 7.)

Short List—**MATTHEW ANTEZZO,** Basilico Fine Arts, 26 Wooster St. Through March 16. . . . **MASSIMO ANTONACI,** Weber, 142 Greene St. Through March 9. . . . **PAUL BOWEN,** Shainman, 560 Broadway. Through March 9. . . . **MARY CARLSON,** Maynes, 225 Lafayette St. Through March 9. . . . **MARGARET CURTIS,** P.P.O.W, 532 Broadway. Through March 16. . . . **MICHAEL GOLDBERG,** Lennon, Weinberg, 560 Broadway. Through March 16. . . . **LEON GOLUB,** Feldman, 31 Mercer St. Through March 30. . . . **ROBERT GROSVENOR,** Markey, 55 Vandam St. Through March 23. . . . **RONI HORN,** Marks, 522 W. 22nd St. Open Thursdays through Sundays, noon to 6; through April 14. . . . **PAUL RAMIREZ JONAS** and **RICCI ALBENDA,** Postmasters, 80 Greene St. Through March 9. . . . **ALEX KATZ,** Blum, 99 Wooster St. Through March 16. . . . **JUTTA KOETHER,** Hearn, 530 W. 22nd St. Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6; through March 10. . . . **ALIX STEWART LAMBERT,** Freire, 580 Broadway. Through March 2. . . . **JULIAN SCHNABEL,** Sperone Westwater, 142 Greene St. Through March 23. . . . **DIANA THATER,** Zwirner, 43 Greene St. Through March 16. . . . **ADJA YUNKERS,** Painting Center, 52 Greene St. Through Feb. 24.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

Art Dealers Association of America—Paintings by Monet, Renoir, Léger, and Hopper are among the big draws at this year's gathering of sixty-two dealers. (7th Regiment Armory, Park Ave. at 66th St. Feb. 22-26. For information, call 940-8925.)

"The Photography Show 96"—Eighty dealers exhibit their best historical and contemporary prints at this whirlwind weekend affair. (New York Hilton, Sixth Ave. at 53rd St. Feb. 23-24 from noon to 8 and Feb. 25 from 11 to 6. For information, call 1-202 986-0105.)

Triple Pier Expo—More than six hundred purveyors of antiques. (Piers 88, 90, and 92, Twelfth Ave. between 48th and 52nd Sts. Feb. 24-25. For information, call 255-0200.)

Arts and Crafts / Modernism—David Rago's auctions of decorative arts and furniture from the turn of the century (March 2 at 4) and later (March 3 at 11). (Chelsea Expo Center, 150 W. 25th St. For information, call 1-609 397-9374.)

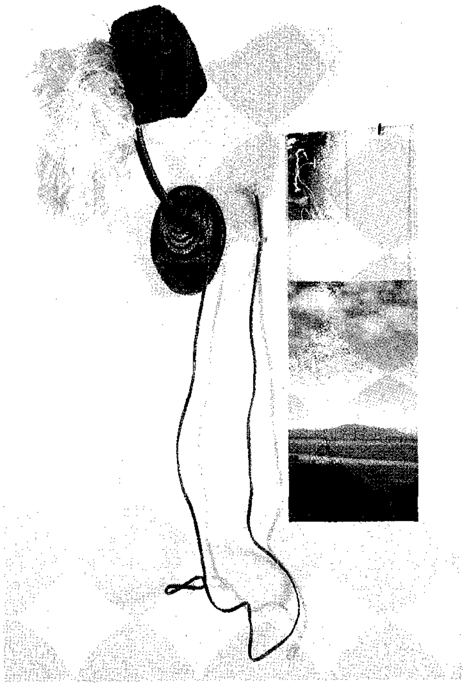
PHOTOGRAPHY

Lola Alvarez Bravo (1907-93)—Two exhibitions of the pioneering Mexican modernist's work. (Americas Society, Park Ave. at 68th St. Open daily, except Mondays, noon to 6. Through Feb. 25. . . . ¶ Throckmorton, 153 E. 61st St. Through March 9.)

Mario Giacomelli / Jacques Henri Lartigue (1894-1986)—Giacomelli has an abiding love for the Adriatic coast and for the Old World domesticity that still thrives there. This retrospective—of rural landscapes and portraits, including an idyllic series of young seminarians at play in the snow—displays the depth of that love. / Panoramic views of upper-middle-class leisure pursuits of the twenties and thirties (motorcar racing and touring, golf), all demonstrating the artist's mercurial flair and his affection for the "art of the transient." Both shows through Feb. 24. (Danziger, 130 Prince St.)

Jim Goldberg / Kiki Smith—This San Francisco-based photographer spent seven years hanging out with runaway teen-agers in California; the result is "Raised by Wolves," a harrowing excavation of pain. The work has none of the prurient glamour of Larry Clark's pictures—these kids are suffering. From a girl's tote bag, on exhibit in a glass case, tumble forth the relics of twisted youth: a flag showing Raggedy Ann and Andy fornicating, a Teddy bear on a noose. Quotations from the subjects ("Sometimes remembering ain't no fun") are scrawled on the gallery walls. / Two dozen color photographs that document the production and installation of the artist's sculptures. Both shows through Feb. 24. (Pace Wildenstein MacGill, 32 E. 57th St.)

Erich Lessing / France Bourély—In thousands of black-and-white pictures, this Austrian photojournalist (who remains underappreciated in the United States) chronicled the Cold War from all angles; the pictures



Self-portrait by Jessica Stockholder (Dia).

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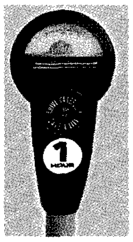

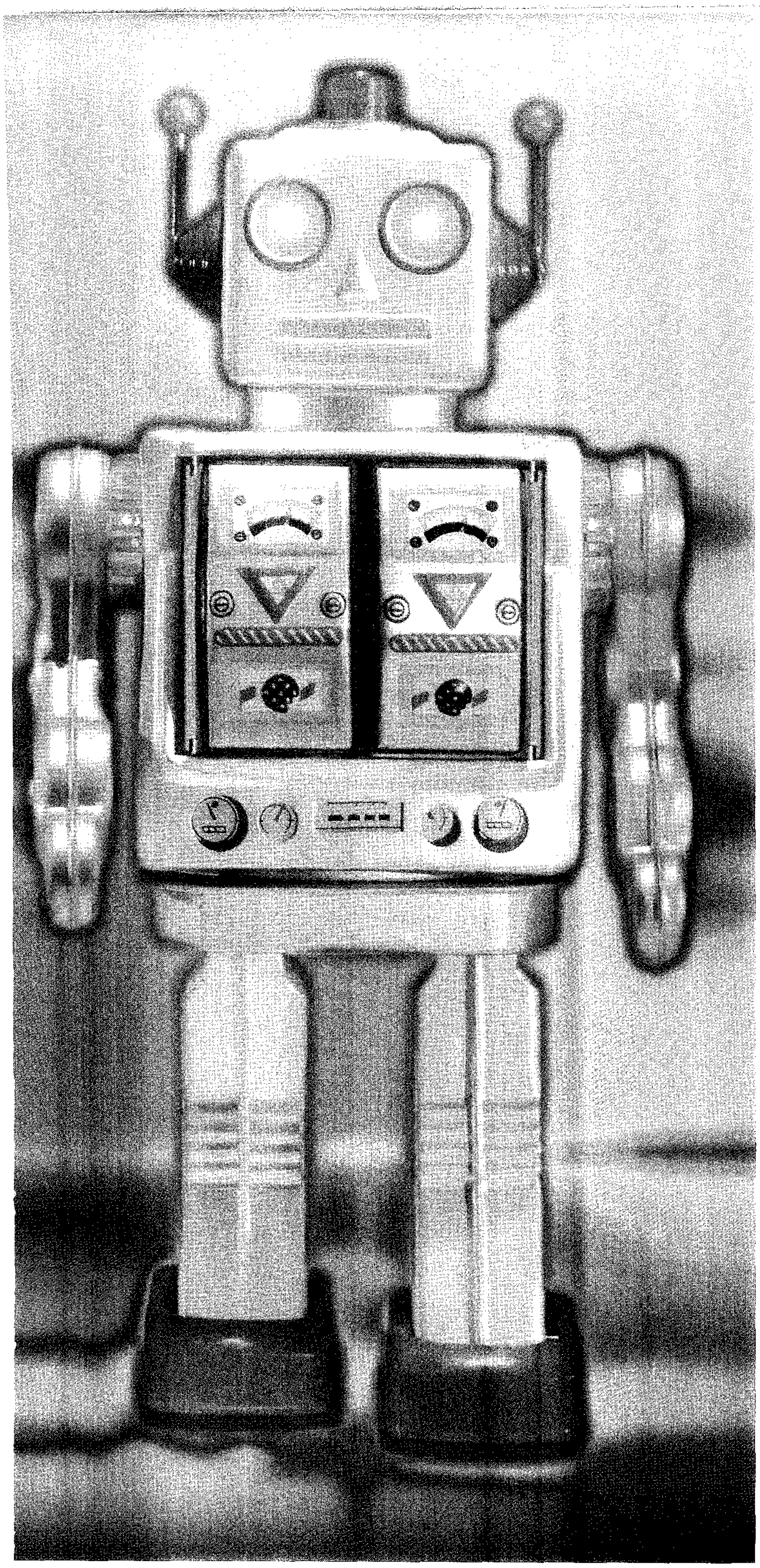

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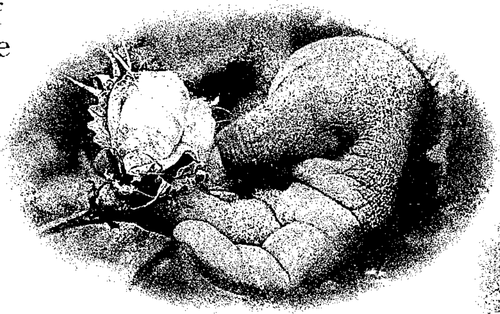

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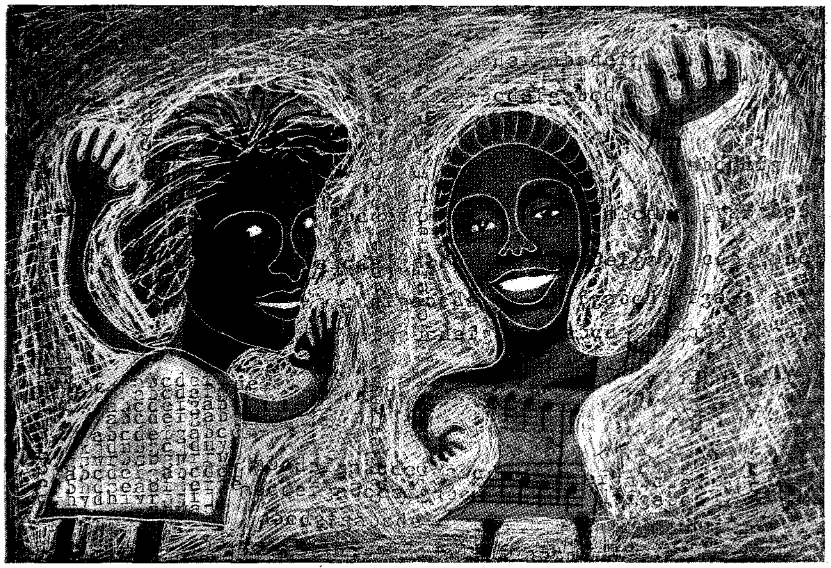
here include sharp views of Eisenhower (a sly airport smile), Krushchev (wielding an ax), Bulganin, and Adenauer. A quiet overhead view of de Gaulle calming the troops in Algiers brings to mind "The Day of the Jackal." This exhibit of more than a hundred works also includes Lessing's chilling photographs of the devastation wrought by the Hungarian Revolution. / Unabashedly beautiful prints made with an electron microscope by the biologist-photographer. The subjects are tsetse flies, mustard-flower petals, and rose stamens, but the images evoke extraterrestrial landscapes and Gothic monsters. Both shows through March 6. (Leica, 670 Broadway. Opens at noon on Saturdays.)



Poet Rita Dove and composer Tania León, whose "Singin' Sepia," performed by Continuum, premières at Merkin Concert Hall.

RACHEL BLISS

Toshio Shibata / Henri Cartier-Bresson—"The Edge of Nature," a black-and-white series that presents, with a distilled irony, Japanese attempts to control the landscape. Soil erosion in the countryside is held at bay with all sorts of concrete buttresses; Shibata's use of both rectilinear and organic compositions gives the impression that these spaces are the unruly offspring of traditional Zen gardens. / A rewarding selection of lesser-known vintage prints by the master of the "decisive moment." Both shows through Feb. 24. (Laurence Miller, 138 Spring St.)

Short List—**ANSEL ADAMS** and **LARS TUNBJÖRK**, International Center of Photography Midtown, Sixth Ave. at 43rd St. Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8; through March 22. . . . **ROBERT ADAMS**, Greenberg, 120 Wooster St. Through March 23. . . . **TOM BARIL** and **ROCKY SCHENCK**, Benrubi, 52 E. 76th St. Through Feb. 24. . . . **BRUCE CRATSLEY**, Richardson, 560 Broadway. Through March 23. . . . **GEORGE DANIELL**, Wessel-O'Connor, 60 Thomas St. Opens at noon; through Feb. 24. . . . **JANINE GORDON**, Gibson, 568 Broadway. Through March 9. . . . **DENNIS HOPPER**, Shafrazi, 119 Wooster St. Through March 16. . . . **CRAIGIE HORSFIELD**, Gladstone, 99 Greene St. Through March 16. . . . **BILL JACOBSON**, Saul, 560 Broadway. Through March 23. . . . **MICHAEL JOHNSON**, Witkin, 415 West Broadway. Through March 2. . . . **THOMAS RUFF**, 303 Gallery, 89 Greene St. Through March 9. . . . **LEEANNE SCHMIDT**, Gallery 292, 120 Wooster St. Through March 23. . . . **BIANCA SFORNI**, Kasmin, 74 Grand St. Through March 9. . . . **FAZAL SHEIKH**, International Center of Photography, 1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St. Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8; through March 31.

(See the museum listings for photography exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art, Dia Center for the Arts, and the Museum of the City of New York.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC

(The box-office number for Alice Tully Hall is 875-5050; for Avery Fisher Hall, 875-5030; and for Carnegie Hall and Weill Recital Hall, 247-7800.)

OPERA

Metropolitan Opera—**COSÌ FAN TUTTE.** (Feb. 21, Feb. 27, March 2, and March 5, all at 8; and Feb. 24 at 1:30.) . . . **TURANDOT.** (Feb. 22 at 8.) . . . **MADAMA BUTTERFLY.** (Feb. 23, Feb. 26, and March 1, all at 8.) . . . **AIDA.** (Feb. 24 and Feb. 28 at 8 and March 2 at 1:30.) . . . **LA FORZA DEL DESTINO**, in the opening performances of a new production. (Feb. 29 and March 4 at 8.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000.)

New York City Opera—**LA TRAVIATA.** (March 1 at 8.) . . . **TOSCA.** (March 2 at 1:30 and March 5 at 8.) . . . **LA BOHÈME.** (March 2 at 8.) . . . **THE MIKADO.** (March 3 at 1:30.) (New York State Theatre. 870-5570.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

New York Philharmonic—At Avery Fisher Hall. Feb. 22 and Feb. 24 at 8, Feb. 23 at 2, and Feb. 27 at 7:30: Daniele Gatti conducts Mahler's Symphony No. 6. . . . ¶ Feb. 29-March 2 and March 5, all at 8: Leonard Slatkin conducts selections from Bernstein's "Dybbuk," Gershwin's Piano Concerto (with Jeffrey Siegel), a pair of Gunther Schuller's Ives arrangements, and Chadwick's "Symphonic Sketches."

Little Orchestra Society—An eighty-fifth-birthday salute to Gian Carlo Menotti. Dino Anagnost conducts. (Alice Tully Hall. Feb. 22 at 7.)

Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra Amsterdam—At Carnegie Hall, Riccardo Chailly conducting. Feb. 23: Johan Wagenaar's "The Taming of the Shrew" Overture (from his 1906 opera), Sibelius's Violin Concerto (with Maxim Vengerov), and Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 4. . . . ¶ Feb. 24: Debussy's "La Mer," Ravel's "Daphnis et Chloé" Suite No. 2, and Stravinsky's "Le Sacre du Printemps." . . . ¶ Feb. 25: Hindemith's "Kammermusik No. 1," Weill's "Dreigroschenoper" Suite, Shostakovich's Suite No. 1 for Jazz Orchestra, and Mussorgsky's "Pictures at an Exhibition" (in an orchestration by the Concertgebouw's bass clarinettist, Geert van Keulen). (Evenings at 8.)

American Composers Orchestra—For the past thirty-six years, the composer Henry Brant has been crafting an orchestration of Ives's Piano Sonata No. 2 (the "Concord"); Ives himself wrote that he had imagined the sounds of a large orchestra when writing the piece. The reworking receives its United States première in this concert, under the title "A Concord Symphony," along with the première of Brant's own "Plowshares and Swords" (which employs the composer's signature method of distributing the performers—in this instance, seventy-four solo players—all around the hall). Sessions's Symphony No. 5 completes the program, which will be conducted by Dennis Russell Davies. (Carnegie Hall. Feb. 25 at 3.)

Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra—The Liverpudlians play the score that Charlie Chaplin "composed" for his 1931 silent movie "City Lights," which will be projected above the orchestra. (What Chaplin actually did was sing pitches to a transcriber, who then arranged them into something workable.) Bernstein's "Candide" Overture and Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue" (with pianist John Bayless) round out the program. Carl Davis conducts. (Avery Fisher Hall. Feb. 26 at 8.)

Iceland Symphony Orchestra—Osmo Vänskä conducts a program so Nordic you might expect to spot the aurora borealis streaking the ceiling: Grieg's Piano Concerto (with Ilana Vered), Sibelius's Symphony No. 2, and the "Galdra-Loftur" Overture of Jón Leifs, the principal Icelandic nationalist composer of the mid-twentieth century. (Carnegie Hall. Feb. 27 at 8.)

Moscow Virtuosi—Vladimir Spivakov conducting, with pianist Igor Tchetouev. (Avery Fisher Hall. Feb. 28 at 8.)

Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra—At Carnegie Hall, Seiji Ozawa conducting. Feb. 29 at 8: Mahler's Symphony No. 2, with soprano Heidi Grant Murphy, mezzo-soprano Florence Quivar, and the Arnold Schoenberg Choir. . . . ¶ March 1 at 8: Mozart's Symphony No. 32, Berg's Three Pieces for Orchestra (Op. 6), and Dvořák's Symphony No. 9 ("From the New World"). . . . ¶ March 2 at 2: A program that includes Mozart's Symphony No. 41 and Strauss's "Eine Alpensinfonie."

New York Chamber Symphony—John Williams is the soloist in guitar concertos by Vivaldi and Richard Harvey. A Handel concerto grosso and Schubert's Sixth Symphony complete the program. Julius Rudel conducts. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100. March 2 at 8. . . . ¶ Alice Tully Hall. March 3 at 8.)

American Symphony Orchestra—Leon Botstein leads a program of works—by Bach, Colin McPhee, Leo Ornstein (his Piano Concerto, with Alan Feinberg as soloist), and Elgar (his Symphony No. 2)—associated with Leopold Stokowski, the orchestra's founder. (Avery Fisher Hall. March 3 at 3.)

Music Before 1800 Productions—Louise Basbas directs choral music by Thomas Stoltzer, Heinrich Finck, and Jacobus Gallus. Gallus was (and is) also known by the surnames Handl and Hähnel—all the options being translations of his original surname, Petelin (which means "rooster" in the language of his native Slovenia). He spent his career deep in Mitteleuropa, mostly in Vienna and Prague, where he achieved a distinctive synthesis of the various international schools of late-Renaissance counterpoint. This concert includes his "Beati Christi Passio," a complex work that draws its text from each of the four Gospels. (A recording of Gallus's sacred music, recently released by Sony Classical, features the Huelgas Ensemble, directed by Paul Van Nevel; the performances are superlative, the music stunning in its dark intensity.) (Corpus Christi Church, 529 W. 121st St. 666-9266. March 3 at 4.)

Prague Chamber Orchestra—With pianist Simone Pedroni. (Avery Fisher Hall. March 3 at 7:30.)

National Arts Centre Orchestra of Canada—Trevor Pinnock conducts the Ottawa-based orchestra in Beethoven's "Coriolan" Overture, Schumann's Piano Concerto (with Jon Kimura Parker), Linda Bouchard's "Vertige," and Mozart's Symphony No. 41 (the "Jupiter"). (Avery Fisher Hall. March 4 at 7:30.)

Orpheus Chamber Orchestra—The conductorless ensemble offers Beethoven's "Coriolan" Overture and Piano Concerto No. 1 (featuring the Argentine pianist Bruno Leonardo Gelber), Sibelius's "Valse Triste," and Stravinsky's "Pulcinella" Suite. (Carnegie Hall. March 4 at 8.)

Philadelphia Orchestra—Mariss Jansons leads Debussy's "La Mer," Saint-Saëns's Cello

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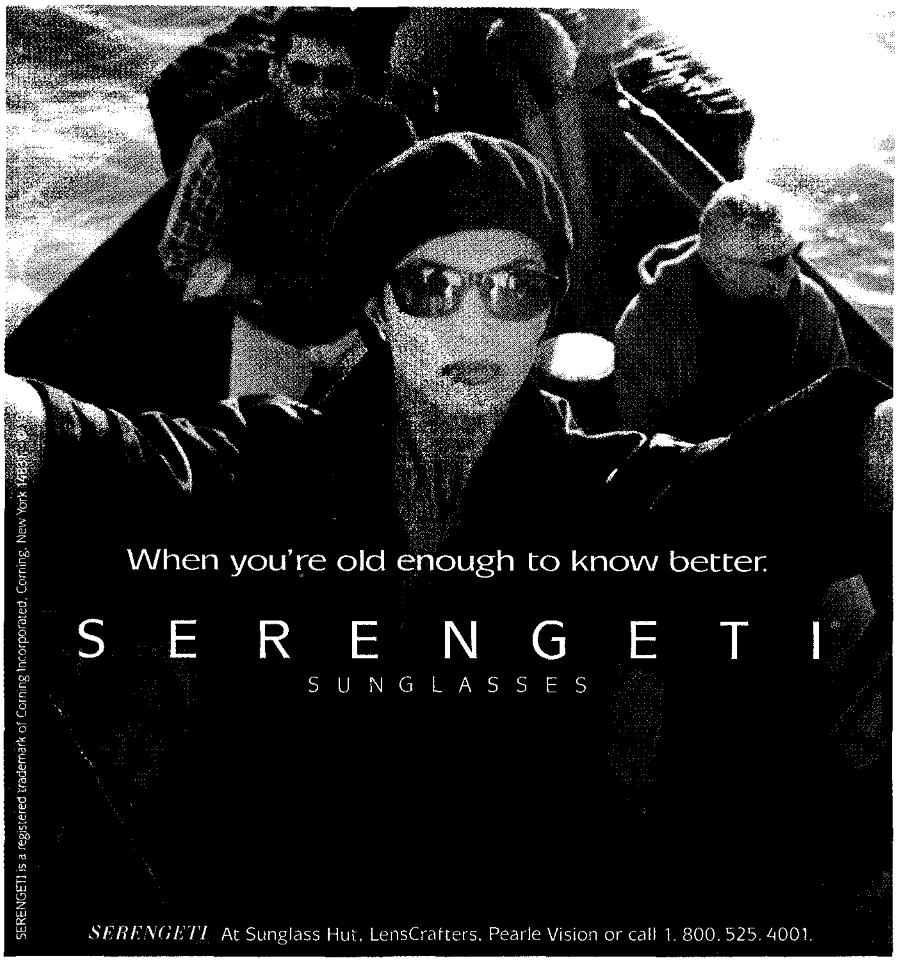

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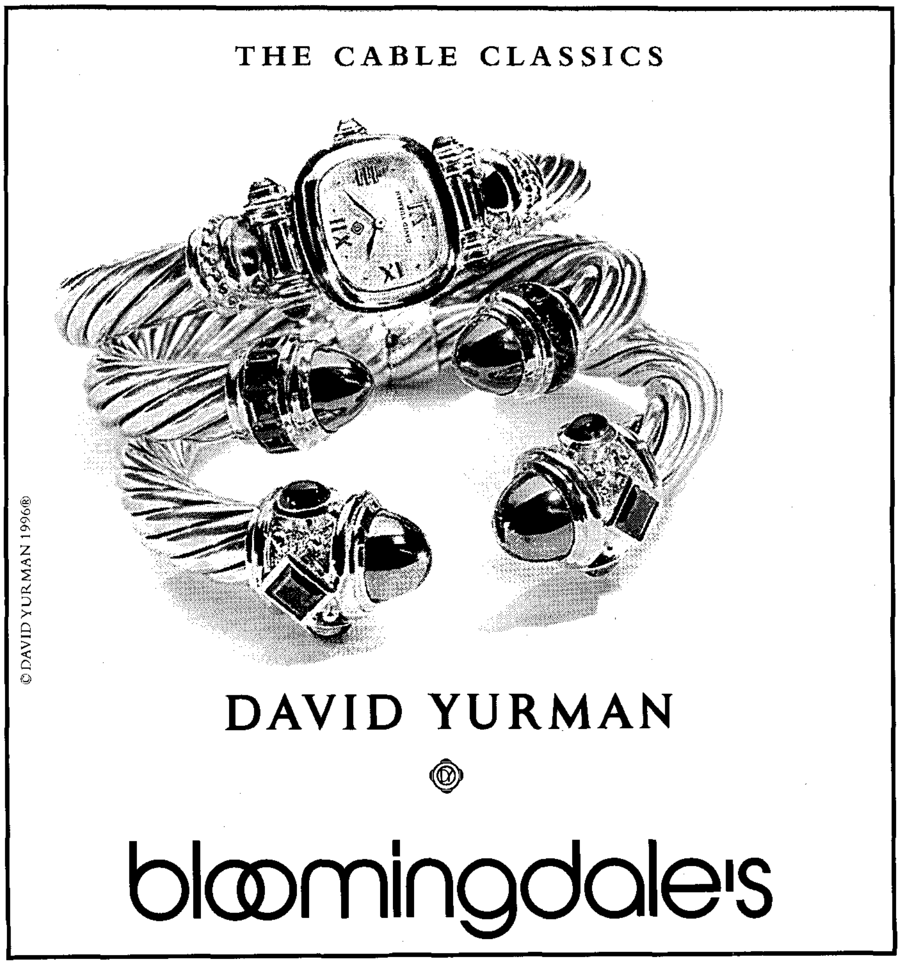


Concerto No. 1 (with Lynn Harrell), and Stravinsky's "Petrushka." (Carnegie Hall. March 5 at 8.)

RECITALS

Menahem Pressler—The Beaux Arts Trio's pianist, in his first Carnegie Hall solo recital. Anyone who assumes that Pressler went into chamber music because he didn't have the chops to be a soloist should consider the comments of Sviatoslav Richter, who, when asked by the German magazine *FonoForum* to share his impressions of other pianists, grudgingly found Leonskaja "on the right track," Michelangeli (then alive) impressive but not to his taste, and Argerich "very gifted," and then said, "Do you know who is phenomenal? The pianist of the Beaux Arts Trio. He looks terrible when he plays; he makes horrible grimaces, but after a minute you forget about that because he is such a good musician." Pressler plays Haydn's E-Flat-Major Sonata (Hob. XVI: 52), Schumann's "Faschingsschwank aus Wien," Debussy's "Estampes," and Chopin's Twenty-four Preludes (Op. 28.) (Feb. 21 at 8.)

Parnassus—Soprano Susan Narucki assists the ensemble in a program of music by Zemlinsky, Crumb (his "Federico's Little Songs for Children"), Stravinsky, Kurtág, and Earl Kim. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 362-8719. Feb. 22 at 8.)

Juilliard String Quartet—Playing Beethoven's Quartets in F Major (Op. 18, No. 1), A Minor (Op. 132), and C Major (Op. 59, No. 3). (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949. Feb. 23 at 8.)

Anonymous 4—The female vocal quartet presents music and poetry from medieval Britain (specifically, works featured on its recent best-selling recording "The Lily and the Lamb"). (Church of St. Mary the Virgin, 145 W. 46th St. 921-2939. Feb. 23 at 8.)

Continuum—The modern-music group, which is celebrating its thirtieth anniversary this season, performs music by Babbitt, Valentin Bibik, Leonid Hrabovsky, Lawrence Moss, and Roberto Sierra, as well as the première of Tania León's "Singin' Sepia," settings for soprano and chamber ensemble of poems by Rita Dove. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 362-8719. Feb. 24 at 7:30.)

Misha Dichter—The pianist performs Beethoven's Sonatas in E-Flat Major (Op. 31, No. 3) and C Minor (Op. 111), as well as Brahms's Sixteen Waltzes (Op. 39) and three of Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsodies. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100. Feb. 24 at 8.)

Guarneri Quartet—Playing Arriaga's String Quartet No. 1, Hindemith's "Die Serenaden" (with soprano Linda Mabbs and oboist Ronald Roseman assisting), and Ravel's Quartet. (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949. Feb. 24 at 8.) . . . ¶ Works by Stravinsky, Turina, and Wolf, as well as Mozart's String Quartet in D Major (K. 499) and Brahms's A-Major Piano Quartet (with pianist Elisabeth Leonskaja). (Alice Tully Hall. Feb. 28 at 8.)

Anne-Sophie Mutter—The violinist performs sonatas by Debussy, Mozart (in E Minor, K. 304), and Bartók (his Second), Brahms's C-Minor Scherzo (from the "F.A.E. Sonata"), and works by Wieniawski and Sarasate; with pianist Lambert Orkis. (Avery Fisher Hall. Feb. 25 at 3.)

International Hindemith Viola Festival—The continuation of an all-Hindemith series marking the centennial of the composer's birth. Feb. 25 at 3: Violist Nabuko Imai performs in several solo and chamber works, including "Die Serenaden" (with soprano Lucy Shelton assisting). . . . ¶ March 3 at 3: Thomas Riebl is the violist of the day in a program that includes the song cycle "Des Todes Tod" and the Trio for Heckelphone, Viola, and Piano. (Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799. The series concludes on March 10.)

Detlef Kraus—The pianist performs Beethoven's "Pastorale" Sonata (Op. 28) and Brahms's Sixteen Waltzes (Op. 39) and E-Flat-Minor Scherzo, in addition to works by Rameau and Bach (his D-Minor Chaconne, in Brahms's transcription for piano left-hand). (Frick Collection, 1 E. 70th St. 288-0700. Feb. 25 at 5.)

André Watts—The pianist's recital comprises works by Bach, Schubert, Chopin, and Ravel. (Avery Fisher Hall. Feb. 25 at 7:30.)

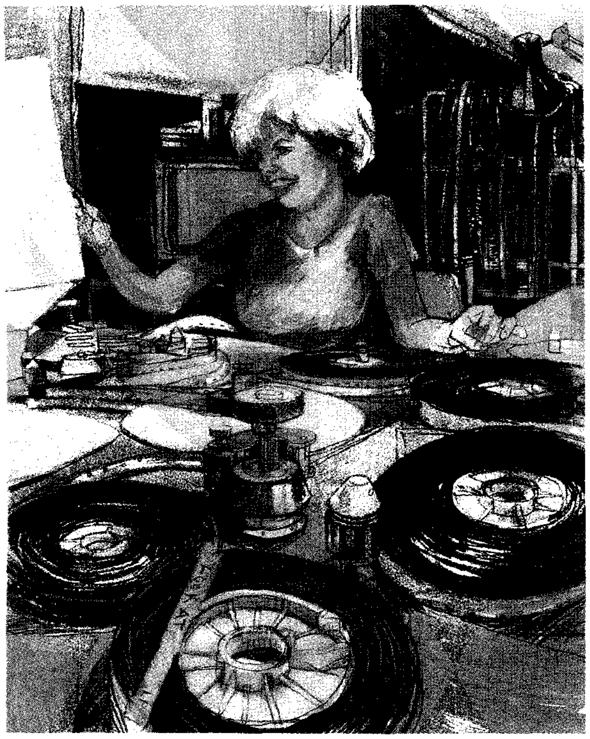
Stephen Hough—The classy Hyperion label recently did us all a favor by signing this fine pianist to a long-term contract. His first Hyperion release, of turn-of-the-century piano concertos by Franz Xaver Scharwenka and Emil von Sauer, underscores his penchant for playing difficult, little-known pieces with such inspired conviction that you're willing to believe for the nonce that they're masterpieces. In this recital, Hough offers an intriguing mélange of the old (three Scarlatti sonatas and Schubert's A-Minor Sonata, D. 784), the recent (Corigliano's 1976 "Etude Fantasy"), the overlooked (Edwin York Bowen's F-Minor Sonata), and the virtuosic (transcriptions by Rachmaninoff, Earl Wild, and Hough himself, of music by Rachmaninoff and Tchaikovsky). (Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center, 165 W. 65th St., plaza level. Feb. 26 at 7:30. For information about tickets, call 875-5050.)

Richard Stoltzman—The clarinettist is joined by pianist Lukas Foss in an all-American program that includes two of Mr. Foss's compositions. (Weill Recital Hall. March 1 at 8.)

Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center—Baritone Hermann Prey is featured in Bach's Cantata No. 82 ("Ich habe genug"), Schumann's "Liederkreis" (Op. 39), and an obscure song by Conradin Kreutzer called "The Dead Bassoon" (with guess which instrument playing an obbligato). The program concludes with Mozart's D-Major Divertimento (K. 251). (Alice Tully Hall. March 1 at 8 and March 3 at 5.)

Music by Schumann—A concert of the composer's vocal and instrumental chamber music, performed by members of the International Hugo Wolf Academy (including soprano Benita Valente, mezzo-soprano Mitsuko Shirai, clarinettist Michael Collins, and pianist Hartmut Höll). (Alice Tully Hall. March 3 at 2.)

Maurizio Pollini—The pianist resumes his survey of Beethoven's piano sonatas with the three from Op. 31 and the C-Major Sonata (Op. 53, the "Waldstein"). (Carnegie Hall. March 3 at 3.)



Film editor Thelma Schoonmaker talks with director Martin Scorsese, at the American Museum of the Moving Image.

LYNN PAULEY

ABOVE AND BEYOND

Raging Bull Session—As part of the Martin Scorsese retrospective at the American Museum of the Moving Image, the director will talk with Thelma Schoonmaker, who has been editing his films since their N.Y.U. days. "He's so very emotional, very tough on himself," Schoonmaker said recently. "In the editing room, he's always worried: did he get what he wanted? Can he carry it off? It's interesting to be present for the torment. I'm a person with a much more even keel. When you're collaborating, it helps if you have opposite characteristics." (35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria. 1-718 784-0077. The talk is sold out; the Scorsese retrospective continues through Feb. 25.)

You Should Eat—Baker Herb Schon, of Grandma's Recipe Rugelach, returns to his grandmother's old neighborhood to reveal her rugelach recipe, bake up a few trays' worth of the Old World pastries, and hand them out. (Eldridge Street Synagogue, 12 Eldridge St. Feb. 25 at 1. For reservations, call 219-0903.) . . . ¶ For her matzoh-history tour, culinary ethnographer Eve Jochnowitz drops in on a Crown Heights matzoh factory and a kosher kitchen. (For more information, call the Culinary Historians of New York, at 1-203 629-4653. March 3 at 11 A.M.)

Supermodels on the Catwalk—Some forty breeds of cat (and their finicky breeders) assemble for feline judgment day at Madison Square Garden. With two walk-in contests for "amateur" cats. (March 1, from 3 to 9; March 2, from 10 to 6; and March 3, from 10 to 5. For entry information, call 1-718 855-1928. For tickets, call 465-6741.)

Readings—Feb. 23 at 8: Ron Hansen reads from his most recent novel, "Atticus." (Barnes & Noble, Broadway at 82nd St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ Feb. 25 at 7: Memoirists Peter Alson and Peter Trachtenberg read from their forthcoming books, "Confessions of an Ivy League Bookie" and "Seven Tattoos," respectively. (KGB, 85 E. 4th St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ Feb. 28 at 7: Novelist Jonathan Dee reads from his "St. Famous." (Limbo, 47 Avenue A, at 4th St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ March 4 at 8: Novelist Peter Carey ("Oscar and Lucinda") and poet Nicholas Christopher ("In the Year of the Comet") read from their work. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100.)

Talks—Feb. 22 at 7:30: Mary Jane Phillips-Matz, biographer of Verdi and a former director of the Freud Museum in London, talks about Wagner's time in Italy. (Liederkranz Foundation, 6 E. 87th St. For more information, call 749-4561.) . . . ¶ Feb. 24 at 11 and 1: For the latest installment in his Jazz for Young People series, Wynton Marsalis patters about Jelly Roll Morton and joins clarinettist Dr. Michael White and saxophonist Victor Goines, among others, on such Morton classics as "Black Bottom Stomp" and "Tom Cat Blues." (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5050.) . . . ¶ Feb. 29 at 8:30 A.M.: Publisher Harold Evans hosts a breakfast chat with Peter Arnett, Jerry Nachman, Morley Safer, and Alfred Kazin, among others, about the literature of war correspondents. (mad.61, 10 E. 61st St. For reservations, call 940-7480.)

Walk—Feb. 24 at 1: Patricia Olmstead, of Urban Explorations, scouts such downtown sites of Colonial African-Americana as the Fraunces Tavern, where George Washington, on the night of his farewell address to the victorious Revolutionary forces, enjoyed the hospitality of the publican Samuel (Black Sam) Fraunces. For more information, call 1-718 721-5254.

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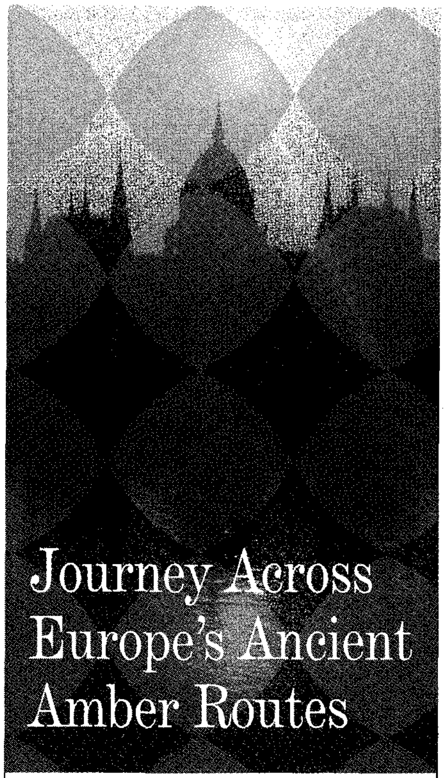
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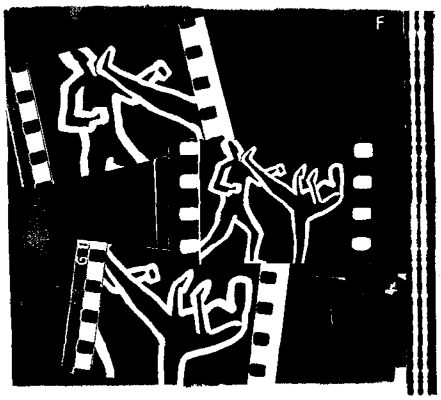


THE MOVIES

FILMS OPENING

Anne Frank Remembered—Jon Blair's documentary includes interviews with Holocaust survivors and footage of Otto Frank, Anne's father, who died in 1980. Kenneth Branagh narrates. Opening February 23. (Quad Cinema and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Before and After—Meryl Streep and Liam Neeson are a married couple whose son (Edward Furlong) is accused of murder, in a drama directed by Barbet Schroeder. Opening February 23. (Embassy 1.)

Bottle Rocket—Three longtime friends (Luke Wilson, Owen C. Wilson, and Robert Musgrave) wind up on the lam, in a comedy directed by Wes Anderson, who co-wrote the screenplay with the latter Wilson. Opening February 21. (Village Theatre VII, Chelsea Cinemas, and Lincoln Square.)

Down Periscope—A comedy directed by David S. Ward, about a submarine captain (Kelsey Grammer) and his ragtag crew (which includes Lauren Holly and Harry Dean Stanton). Written by Hugh Wilson, Andrew Kurtzman, and Eliot Wald. Opening March 1.

From the Journals of Jean Seberg—Mary Beth Hurt has the title role in a drama about the life of the Iowa-born actress who died in 1979 at the age of forty. Written and directed by Mark Rappaport. Opening March 1. (Cinema Village.)

Man of the Year—Dirk Shafer's comic account of his reign as *Playgirl's* Man of the Year, a position that kept him deep in the closet during 1992. Opening March 1. (Quad Cinema.)

Mary Reilly—Julia Roberts stars as a maid in the household of Dr. Henry Jekyll (John Malkovich), in a drama directed by Stephen Frears. Written by Christopher Hampton, from Valerie Martin's 1990 novel, which took the Robert Louis Stevenson classic as its starting point. Opening February 23. (Village East Cinemas, Gemini, Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, and Criterion Center.)

The Neon Bible—A drama set in nineteen-forties Georgia, about a boy and his night-club-singer aunt (Gena Rowlands). Written and directed by Terence Davies, from the novel by John Kennedy Toole. Opening March 1.

Rumble in the Bronx—Jackie Chan's latest action film. (Reviewed below in Current Films.) Opening February 23.

The Star Maker—A Roman con man (Sergio Castellitto) travels through Sicily posing as a movie-studio talent scout, in a drama directed by Giuseppe Tornatore. In Italian. Opening March 1.

Target—In Sandip Ray's drama, a villainous landowner (Mohan Agashe) hires a sharpshooter (Om Puri) from the untouchable caste. Written by the director's father, Satyajit Ray. In Hindi. Opening February 28. (Film Forum.)

Unforgettable—A doctor (Ray Liotta) accused of murdering his wife sets out to catch the real culprit using experimental memory-inducing injections. With Linda Fiorentino. Directed by John Dahl; written by Bill Geddie. Opening February 23.

Up Close and Personal—Michelle Pfeiffer plays an aspiring television newswoman and Robert Redford her mentor, in a romantic drama directed by Jon Avnet. With Stockard Channing. Written by Joan Didion and John Gregory Dunne. Opening March 1.

The Young Poisoner's Handbook—Ben Ross's black comedy. (Reviewed below in Current Films.) Opening February 23.

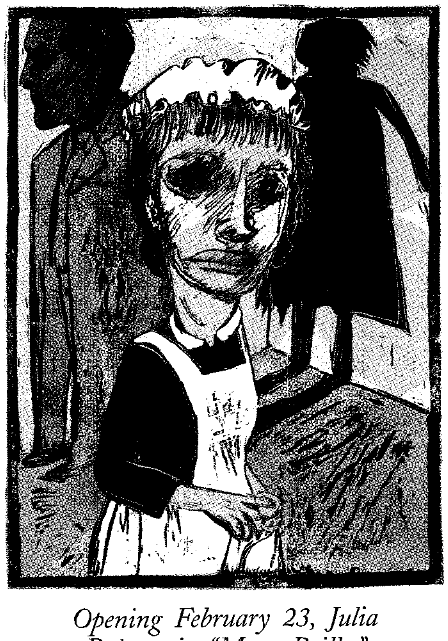
CURRENT FILMS

(The signed notes are by Bruce Diones, Sarah Kerr, Terrence Rafferty, and James Wolcott. If a movie has been reviewed in The Current Cinema, the date of its review is given. Theatre information is listed on page 49.)

Angels & Insects—This film, based on an A. S. Byatt neo-Victorian novella, is flatly directed by Philip Haas, but at least the performances are handsomely framed. Patsy Kensit plays an aristocrat who lives on her looks, Kristin Scott Thomas a poor relation; they share an interest in the same man, a naturalist played by Mark Rylance. Acting-wise, it's no contest: Scott Thomas turns in a beautiful portrait of poise, yearning, and sublimation.—J.W. (1/29/96) (Village East Cinemas, Tower East, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Antonia's Line—A Dutch feminist fairy tale about an eccentric single mother (the impressive Willeke van Ammelrooy) who sets up housekeeping on a farm after the Second World War and takes all kinds of strays—from a retarded rape victim to a depressive, Schopenhauer-saturated intellectual—under her wing. The movie could be a crowd pleaser at art houses, but what it's packaging is little more than self-regard: Antonia and her clan are righteous, and anyone who gets in their way is a pig. Written and directed by Marleen Gorris. In Dutch.—S.K. (Angelika Film Center and Cinema 3rd Avenue.)

Beautiful Girls—Timothy Hutton goes home for his ten-year high-school reunion and hooks up with his old friends Matt Dillon, Michael Rappaport, and Noah Emmerich. Imagine "Diner" crossed with "The Big Chill"—except that this one is about confused Generation Xers, so instead of trying to hang onto youth these guys are still trying to get over it. It's too long by half an hour, and the director, Ted Demme, can't hold onto a rhythm, but the actors are uniformly sharp, and so are the actresses: Mira Sorvino, Uma Thurman, Lauren Holly, and Rosie O'Donnell. Written by Scott Rosenberg.—S.K. (Angelika Film Center, Cinema II, Orpheum VII, Chelsea Cinemas, and



Opening February 23, Julia Roberts in "Mary Reilly."

FRANCES JETTER

1996

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Amber: Window to the Past *is generously supported by Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Ross and The Ambrose Monell Foundation. Additional support has been provided by Mr. Plato Malozemoff, Mr. Don H. Nelson, and the National Endowment for the Arts.*

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Damsel fly, private collection. Carp leaping out of the water, China, early eighteenth century, American Museum of Natural History. Winged deity with a youth, Etruscan, c. fifth century B.C., private collection. Photos: AM

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84th Street Sixplex. . . . ¶ Embassy 1; through Feb. 22. . . . ¶ Embassy 2; starting Feb. 23.)

BROKEN ARROW—In John Woo's new movie, John Travolta plays a disgruntled Air Force pilot who hijacks a couple of nuclear warheads. This is not, however, a standard-issue doomsday thriller, but a spectacularly nutty and entertaining chase picture: like "North by Northwest," it wants to cover as much ground, in as many different ways, as it possibly can, and it's disarmingly aware of its own absurdity. Woo—who is best known for his delirious Hong Kong gangster movies—tosses off risky stunts and eye-popping effects like one-liners, with a rapid-fire rhythm that lets us know that he's got a million of 'em. The hero and the heroine, played by Christian Slater and Samantha Mathis, are likable, but in a Woo picture the character to watch is invariably the chain-smoking guy in shades. Here that guy is Travolta, who brings a refreshingly all-American exuberance to action-movie villainy. Also with Delroy Lindo, Howie Long, Kurtwood Smith, and Frank Whaley. Screenplay by Graham Yost (who also wrote "Speed").—T.R. (2/19/96) (Murray Hill Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Olympia, and Criterion Center.)

CITY HALL—Harold Becker's ambitious political melodrama has dozens of characters and locations, four screenwriters (Ken Lipper, Paul Schrader, Nicholas Pileggi, and Bo Goldman), and at least three different ideas about what kind of story it's telling. The overall aim is to plunge the viewer into the chaos of municipal government, but the movie, like the New York City it portrays, never quite manages to satisfy all the conflicting interests that tug at it. The picture's first half, which sets up the elaborate thriller machinery, is speedy, clever, and absorbing; the diffuse second half feels like the betrayal of a campaign promise. Al Pacino (as the mayor), John Cusack (as an idealistic deputy mayor), and Danny Aiello (as a corrupt Brooklyn political boss) have the meatiest roles; the supporting cast is filled with terrific actors—notably Bridget Fonda, David Paymer, and Martin Landau—who have almost nothing to do.—T.R. (2/19/96) (Village East Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Murray Hill Cinemas, Beekman, Orpheum VII, Ziegfeld, and 84th Street Sixplex.)

DEAD MAN WALKING—Tim Robbins's blunt, powerful movie tells the story of a murderer (Sean Penn) awaiting execution and a nun (Susan Sarandon) trying to save his soul—and, if possible, his skin. The filmmaker clearly hopes that familiarity with the grisly realities of capital punishment will finally breed contempt for the idea of premeditated, state-sponsored killing. And although the picture sometimes turns clunky and flat, as if it were sagging under the weight of its good intentions, it winds up being devastatingly effective. Penn has to reveal, within a reckless and apparently despicable character, a salvageable soul, and he makes the erratic rhythm of the condemned man's spiritual progress seem effortless and natural: he captures the languid, insinuating tempo of grace invading a locked-up spirit.—T.R. (1/8/96) (Village Theatre VII, 19th Street East 6, 34th Street Showplace, First & 62nd Cinemas, and Lincoln Square.)

HATE (LA HAINE)—This black-and-white French film, directed by Mathieu Kassovitz, is meant to be an urgent fax from the front lines of urban unrest—a political flyer spat out in cinéma vérité. Covering twenty-four hours in a multiracial housing project on the outskirts of Paris rocked by rioting and looting, it tracks an Arab (Said Taghmaoui), a Jew (Vincent Cassel), and a black (Hubert Kounde) as they argue, scrounge, and scuffle with the police. Their quarrelling is lively (when the language gets too rude, one of them says, "Talk nice, we're in France"), and Kassovitz's camera seems equipped with racing wheels during the action sequences. But the picture's ache for raw sociological impact is overwhelmed by its all-pervasive rap-video movieness. Kassovitz directs like an honor-

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ary soul brother of Spike Lee, the Hughes brothers, John Singleton, and Matty Rich (smart-alecks are already calling this film "Do la Right Thing"), pausing for static vignettes that look like Jim Jarmusch postcards from Nowheresville. When the film temporarily abandons the projects for picaresque adventure in Paris, it starts to imitate middle-period Bertrand Blier in its barking absurdism, with a garnish of Godardian graffiti. Sincere and intense, "Hate" ends up scrambling its own signal. It's a message movie with too many other people's messages. In French.—J.W. (Village Theatre VII.)

The Juror—The indomitable Demi Moore plays the title role, but the real action belongs to Alec Baldwin, who autographs every scene he's in with a funny, scary, suave rendition of deranged narcissism. He co-stars as the Teacher, a hood hired by a mob boss (Tony Lo Bianco) to tamper with a jury in a double-homicide case. Not your average goodfella, Baldwin's Teacher is a Zen-aesthete, Nietzschean-superman sociopath; obsessed with the juror he targets, Moore's Annie Liard, he wishes to transform himself into "sheer love." Before that can happen, a lot of bystanders get hurt. Among those imperilled is Annie's best friend, a doctor who parties as hard as she works, portrayed with feathery, lyrical abandon by Anne Heche. Directed by Brian Gibson ("What's Love Got to Do with It") and set in upstate New York, the film noses around domestic nooks that look like decorated caves and creates an atmosphere of secrecy and subterfuge. The spell is broken when the scene shifts to Guatemala, land of colorful masks and ruined temples, where the script seems to suffer a nervous breakdown. Indefensible as cinema, inexplicable as psychology, "The Juror" is worth catching only as Baldwin's charisma-workout video. He's like Jerry Lewis's Buddy Love from "The Nutty Professor" resurrected as the angel of death.—J.W. (2/12/96) (Village Theatre VII, Orpheum VII, Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Olympia, and Criterion Center.)

NEW YORK Herald Trib
ST. JEAN
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Opening March 1, "From the Journals of Jean Seberg."

SUSAN SAAS

Leaving Las Vegas—In Mike Figgis's startlingly beautiful new movie, Nicolas Cage gives a great performance as a failed writer who is consciously drinking himself to death. Figgis tells the story as a series of vivid, intense moments; the sole trace of conventional drama is the hero's affair with a kindhearted young hooker (superbly played by Elisabeth Shue). But the possibility that love will rescue him from his fate vanishes quickly, like a mirage. Although the movie is terribly, crushingly sad, its honesty is invigorating: it names its poison and downs it, neat.—T.R. (11/6/95) (Village East Cinemas, 34th Street Showplace, First & 62nd Cinemas, Orpheum VII, Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema, and Criterion Center.)

A Midwinter's Tale—Modest to a fault. After the flailing overreach (and critical failure) of his Frankenstein film, Kenneth Branagh beats a tactical retreat and returns to his theatrical roots, as writer and director of this affectionate farce about a sad-sack ensemble fumbling to stage "Hamlet" in a provincial village. The production's flustered star and director (i.e., Branagh's alter ego) is played by Michael Maloney, whose features suggest Ralph Fiennes filled with the spirit of the Holy Ghost. The cast is game—Richard Briers is admirably gruff, Julia Sawalha seems self-propelled—and its slapstick produces some laughs, but the film is too frantic in seeking our approval. Branagh seems to be running a pet shop for actors in dire need of adoption. He provides enough tearful reconciliations at the end of the film to make one ill. The only cool cucumber on the screen is Joan Collins, wielding a cellular phone as the actor-director's agent.—J.W. (2/12/96) (Village East Cinema and Lincoln Square.)

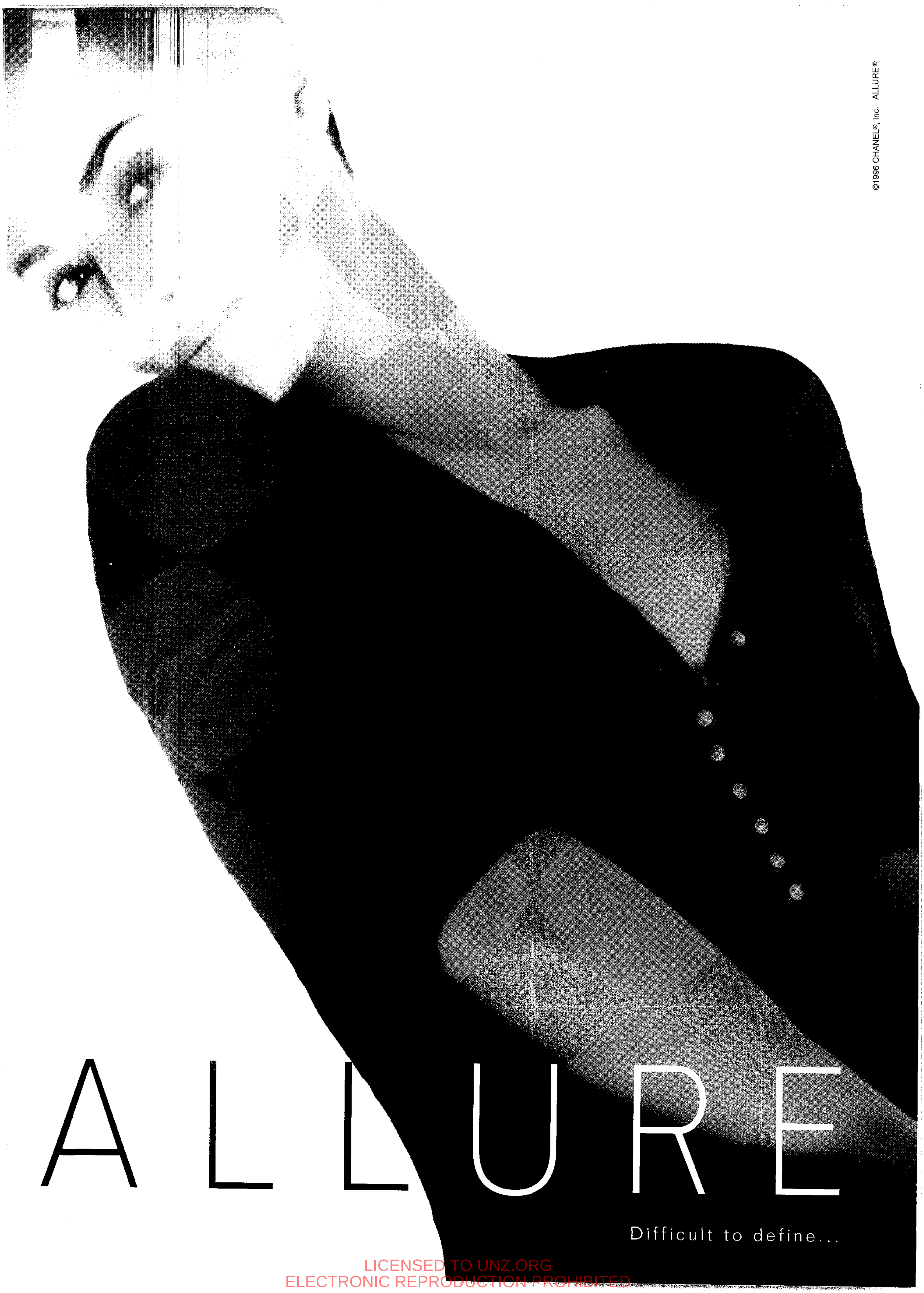
Rumble in the Bronx—The Hong Kong superstar Jackie Chan may be the greatest physical performer in action movies today—his fluid movements, breathtaking stunts, and comically choreographed fights display a grace and skill that rival Buster Keaton's. If his new American film, about stolen diamonds and the mob, lacks the inspired lunacy of his Hong Kong classics ("Drunken Master," "Police Story"), it's still fine as a ninety-minute Jackie Chan primer. Breaking an ankle during filming (he wears a cast painted as a sneaker) probably put a crimp in his artistry. The movie is disjointed and, at times, unintentionally funny, but its ineptitude is so good-natured that it makes for a charming alternative to the mind-numbing professionalism of American action movies. And, while almost all of the actors are bad (they appear to have been cast mainly for how well their flying bodies can destroy the furniture), Chan has the beautiful, eager confidence of a movie star who loves his work. Directed by Stanley Tong.—B.D. (Village Theatre VII, 19th Street East 6, 34th Street Showplace, Orpheum VII, 84th Street Sixplex, and Criterion Center; starting Feb. 23.)

Sense and Sensibility—The director, Ang Lee, and the screenwriter, Emma Thompson, turn Jane Austen's first published novel into a gracious and unfailingly pleasant entertainment. Thompson also plays the very sensible heroine, Elinor Dashwood, and carries the movie without overwhelming her fellow-actors. (Alan Rickman and Kate Winslet are especially good; the only clinker is a grotesquely mannered performance by Hugh Grant as Elinor's suitor.) If the picture pressed its temperate charms on us any harder, they would be much easier to resist.—T.R. (12/18/95) (Village Theatre VII, 19th Street East 6, Coronet, and Lincoln Square.)

The Young Poisoner's Handbook—In telling the true story of a fourteen-year-old English boy who poisoned his family, Benjamin Ross's début feature sets up a cartoonish, stylized household and then, bit by bit, humanizes its members' sufferings at the hands of the young psychopath. Unfortunately, the rest of the movie is either locked in a hospital for the criminally insane, during the boy's dreary rehabilitation, or confined to the drab workplace where, after his parole, he returns to his evil-toxicologist ways. It's well directed and sincerely acted (Hugh O'Conor, who plays the boy, uses his wide-eyed elfin stare to great coldhearted effect), but the screenplay doesn't maintain the dark, discomfiting humor it strives for, and the drama becomes as dispassionate as its antihero's emotionless narration.—B.D. (Angelika Film Center.)

ALSO PLAYING

BABE (reviewed in our issue of 9/4/95): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **BALTO:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **BED OF ROSES:** Village Theatre VII, 19th Street East 6, Murray Hill Cinemas, Orpheum VII, Lincoln Square, and Criterion Center. . . . **BLACK SHEEP:** 34th Street Showplace, Gemini, East 85th Street, Waverly, 23rd St. West Triplex, 84th Street Sixplex, and Astor Plaza. . . . **THE BRIDGES OF MADISON COUNTY** (6/19/95): Village East Cinemas, Gemini, Orpheum VII, 23rd St. West Triplex, and Lincoln Square. . . . **CATWALK:** Sutton. . . . **THE CITY OF LOST CHILDREN:** Angelika Film Center. . . . **FRANKIE STARLIGHT:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **FRENCH TWIST** (1/15/96): Quad Cinema and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **FROM DUSK TILL DAWN** (2/5/96): Angelika Film Center, Orpheum VII, Chelsea Cinemas, and 84th Street Sixplex. . . . **HAPPY GILMORE:** 34th St. East, First & 62nd Cinemas, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, Waverly, Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, and National Twin. . . . **HEADLESS BODY IN TOPLESS BAR:** Quad Cinema. . . . **HEAT** (12/25/95-1/1/96): Village Theatre VII, 19th Street East 6, New York Twin, Orpheum VII, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema, and Criterion Center. . . . **JADE:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **LAMERICA:** Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **LAST SUMMER IN THE HAMPTONS:** Cinema Village and Angelika 57. . . . **MIGHTY APHRODITE** (10/30/95): Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **MR. HOLLAND'S OPUS** (1/29/96): Village East Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Murray Hill Cinemas, 86th Street East Twin, and Lincoln Square. . . . **MR. WRONG:** Village East Cinemas, Cinema I, Orpheum VII, Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, and Embassy 2. . . . **MUPPET TREASURE ISLAND:** Village Theatre VII, Gotham Cinema, 86th Street East Twin, 23rd St. West Triplex, Guild, and Lincoln Square. . . . **NICO ICON:** Film Forum. . . . **NUEBA YOL:** Embassy 4. . . . **ONCE UPON A TIME . . . WHEN WE WERE COLORED:** Manhattan Twin. . . . **OTHELLO** (12/18/95): Paris. . . . **PERSUASION** (9/25/95): Quad Cinema and Cinema 3. . . . **THE POSTMAN:** Village East Cinemas, Eastside Playhouse, and Carnegie Hall Cinemas. . . .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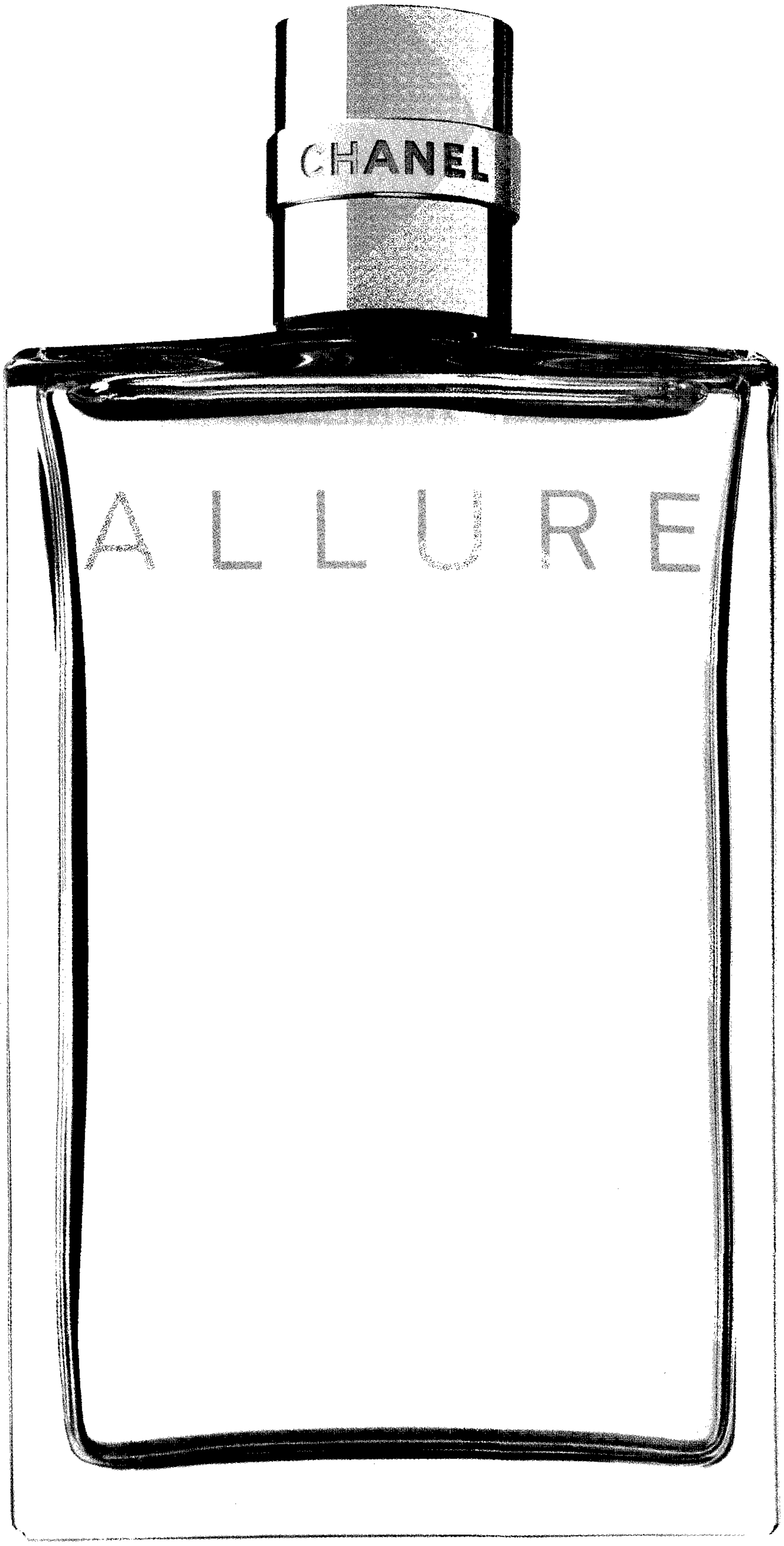
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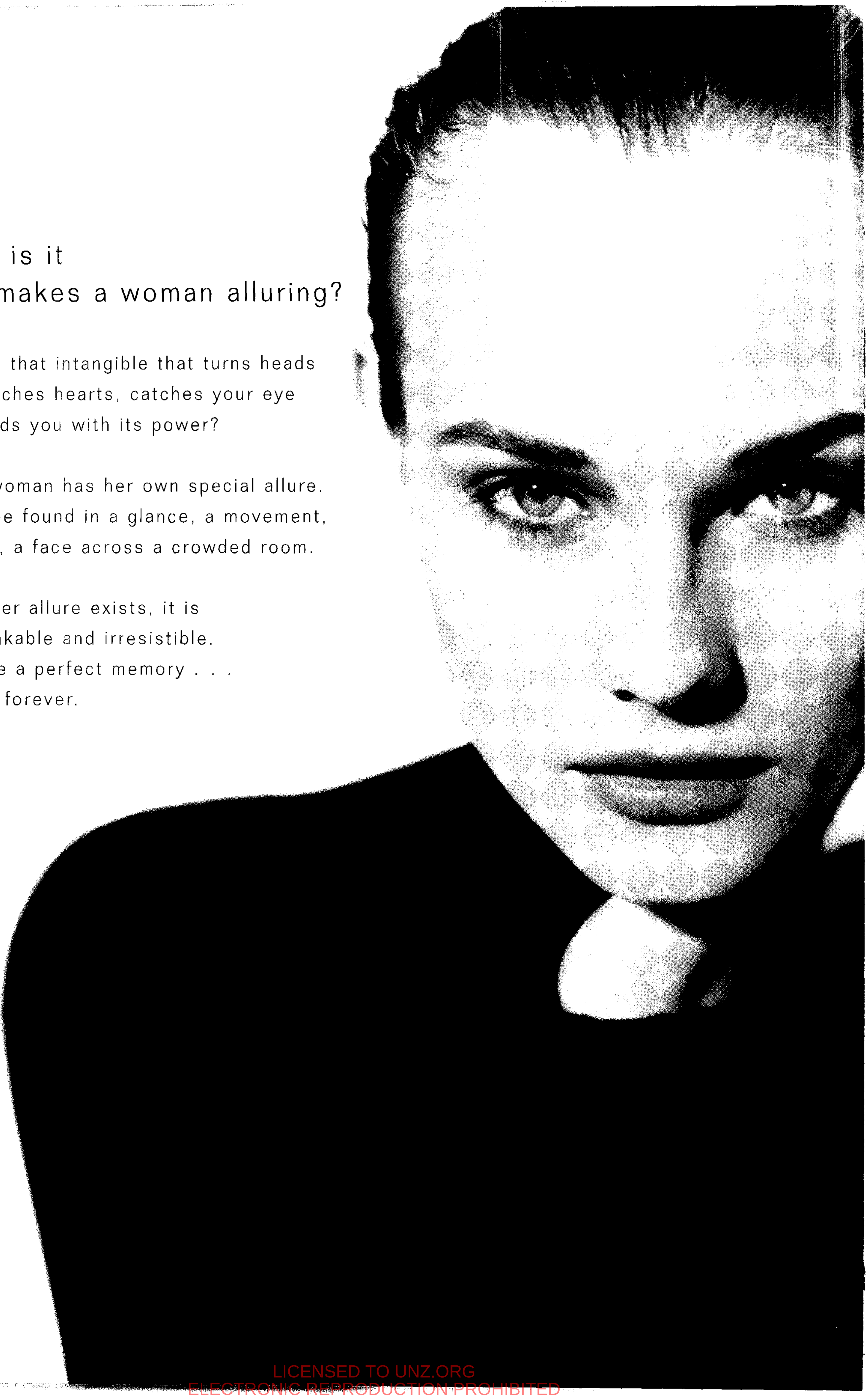

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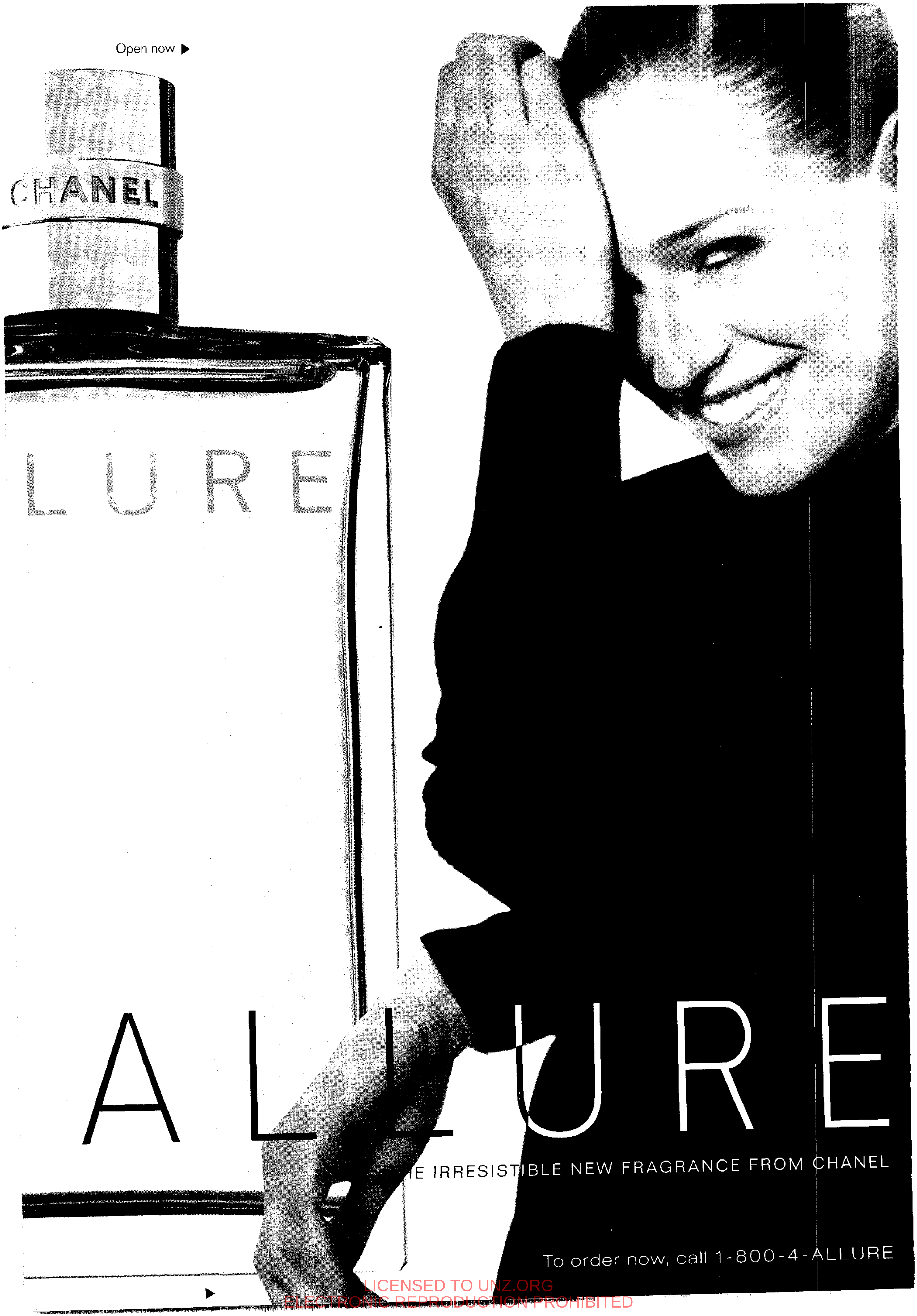
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RESTORATION: 68th St. Playhouse, Waverly, and Carnegie Hall Cinemas. . . . **RICHARD III** (1/22/96): Village East Cinemas, Baronet, Chelsea Cinemas, and Lincoln Square. . . . **SHANGHAI TRIAD:** Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **SONIC OUTLAWS:** Film Forum. . . . **THINGS TO DO IN DENVER WHEN YOU'RE DEAD:** Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Square. . . . **TO DIE FOR:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **12 MONKEYS** (1/22/96): Manhattan Twin, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, and 84th Street Sixplex. . . . **THE USUAL SUSPECTS** (8/14/95): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **WAITING TO EXHALE** (1/15/96): 23rd St. West Triplex, Regency, and Criterion Center. . . . **WHEN NIGHT IS FALLING:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **THE WHITE BALLOON:** Quad Cinema and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **WHITE SQUALL** (2/5/96): Village Theatre VII, 19th Street East 6, Murray Hill Cinemas, Sutton, 86th Street East Twin, and 84th Street Sixplex.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

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(For show times, call 777-FILM, except where noted.)

EAST SIDE

ANGELIKA FILM CENTER, 18 W. Houston St.
VILLAGE THEATRE VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
CINEMA VILLAGE, 22 E. 12th St.
VILLAGE EAST CINEMAS, Second Ave. at 12th St.
19TH STREET EAST 6, Broadway at 19th St.
MURRAY HILL CINEMAS, 160 E. 34th St.
34TH STREET SHOWPLACE, 238 E. 34th St.
34TH ST. EAST, 241 E. 34th St.
EASTSIDE PLAYHOUSE, Third Ave. at 55th St.
SUTTON 1 AND 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
GOTHAM CINEMA, Third Ave. at 58th St.
MANHATTAN TWIN, Third Ave. at 59th St.
59TH STREET EAST CINEMA, 239 E. 59th St.
BARONET AND CORONET, Third Ave. at 59th St.
CINEMA I, CINEMA II, AND CINEMA 3RD AVENUE, Third Ave. at 60th St.
FIRST & 62ND CINEMAS, 400 E. 62nd St.
GEMINI 1 AND 2, Second Ave. at 64th St.
BEEKMAN, Second Ave. at 66th St.
NEW YORK TWIN, Second Ave. at 67th St.
68TH ST. PLAYHOUSE, Third Ave. at 68th St.
TOWER EAST, Third Ave. at 71st St.
EAST 85TH STREET, First Ave. at 85th St.
PARK & 86TH STREET CINEMAS, 125 E. 86th St.
ORPHEUM VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
86TH STREET EAST TWIN, Third Ave. at 86th St.

WEST SIDE

FILM FORUM, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
WAVERLY 1 AND 2, Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.
ART GREENWICH TWIN, Greenwich Ave. at 12th St.
QUAD CINEMA, 34 W. 13th St.
CHELSEA CINEMAS, 260 W. 23rd St.
23RD ST. WEST TRIPLEX, 333 W. 23rd St.
GUILD, 33 W. 50th St.
WORLDWIDE CINEMAS, 50th St. between Eighth and Ninth Aves.
ZIEGFELD, 141 W. 54th St.
CARNEGIE HALL CINEMAS, Seventh Ave. between 56th and 57th Sts.
ANGELIKA 57, 225 W. 57th St.
PARIS, 4 W. 58th St.
CINEMA 3, 2 W. 59th St.
62ND & BROADWAY, 62 W. 62nd St.
LINCOLN PLAZA CINEMAS, Broadway at 63rd St. (757-2280).
REGENCY, Broadway at 67th St.
LINCOLN SQUARE, Broadway at 68th St.
84TH STREET SIXPLEX, Broadway at 84th St.
METRO CINEMA 1 AND 2, Broadway at 99th St.
OLYMPIA I AND II, Broadway at 107th St.

TIMES SQUARE AREA

ASTOR PLAZA, 44th St. at Broadway.
CRITERION CENTER, Broadway at 44th St.
EMBASSY 1, Broadway at 46th St.
EMBASSY 2, 3, AND 4, Seventh Ave. at 47th St.
NATIONAL TWIN, Broadway at 44th St.

REVIVALS

(The following notes are by Pauline Kael and Michael Sragow. Theatre addresses and phone numbers appear with the listings following these notes.)

AMERICA AMERICA (1963)—Elia Kazan's account, drawn from his own family background, of the fierce struggle of a Greek boy at the turn of the century to escape the persecutions that the Greeks suffered in Turkey and to make his way to the fabled land of opportunity. Though the picture is flawed by the miscasting of Stathis Giallelis in the central role, and the main narrative line is unconvincing melodrama, there are some fine images and some memorable performances. You can feel the desperate ambitiousness to create an epic, yet the hero is so blandly uninteresting that there's nothing to hold the movie together.—P.K. (Museum of Modern Art; Feb. 23.)

BLACK NARCISSUS (1947)—Made by the British producing-directing-writing team the Archers (Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger), this lush adaptation of Rumer Godden's 1939 novel is about faith and temptation: Anglican nuns wrestle with the sensual environment surrounding their Himalayan mission. Much of the Archers' career is summed up when a British estate manager (David Farrar) tells the Sister Superior (a suggestively tense Deborah Kerr), "There's something in the atmosphere that makes everything seem exaggerated." Without leaving England, the Archers created a rapturous landscape whose colors seem to spill over onto the nuns' off-white habits. With Flora Robson, Kathleen Byron, Sabu, and Jean Simmons (as a native girl).—M.S. (Symphony Space; Feb. 27.)

THE KING OF COMEDY (1983)—Robert De Niro plays Rupert Pupkin, a grossly insensitive, cold-hearted deadhead who is determined to become a TV star like his idol, the comic Jerry Langford, played by Jerry Lewis. The director, Martin Scorsese, must have decided to give us the cold creeps; the shots are held so long that we look for more in them than is there. With Sandra Bernhard as the hysterical Masha, who helps Pupkin kidnap Langford.—P.K. (American Museum of the Moving Image; Feb. 25.)

NOW, VOYAGER (1942)—A campy tearjerker variation on the Cinderella story: a psychiatrist (Claude Rains) enables the sexually repressed, neurotically dowdy Bostonian Charlotte Vale (Bette Davis) to become an attractive, confident woman. A couple of the most quoted bits in film history come from this movie: Paul Henreid lighting two cigarettes and tenderly handing one to Davis, and her parting line to him: "Don't let's ask for the moon—we have the stars." The score, by Max Steiner, aims right for the jugular; the director, Irving Rapper, is just barely competent, and the action plods along, yet this picture is all of a piece, and if it were better it might not work at all. This way, it's a schlock classic.—P.K. (A Different Light Bookstore; March 3.)

PANIQUE (1946)—Julien Duvivier's psychological thriller is a devastatingly effective job of visual storytelling. Michel Simon is the stranger in a Paris suburb who is framed for murder; Viviane Romance and her lover, Paul Bernard, are the ones who frame him. The sordid, intriguingly nasty movie—taken, inevitably, from a Simenon novel—has some pretensions toward being a parable of sadistic injustice; on that level, it can't be taken very seriously. But in terms of how the sequences are planned, and how they build, it's an unusual, near-perfect piece of film craftsmanship. In French.—P.K. (Florence Gould Hall; Feb. 27.)

LATE RUNS, CLASSICS, ETC.

(Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.)

FILM FORUM 2, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—"Taxi Driver" (1976, Martin Scorsese), with Robert De Niro, Harvey Keitel, Cybill Shepherd, and Jodie Foster.

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—Feb.

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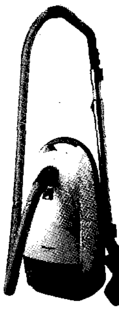

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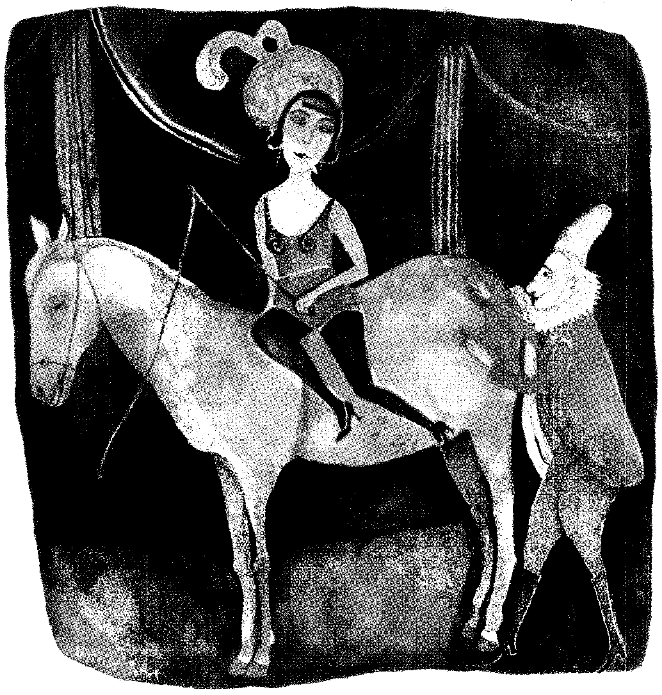
22 at 2:30 and Feb. 27 at 6: "Leave Her to Heaven" (1945, John M. Stahl), with Gene Tierney, Cornel Wilde, Jeanne Crain, and Vincent Price. . . . ¶ Feb. 22-23, Feb. 25-27, March 1-3, and March 5: Silent films starring Asta Nielsen. With non-English intertitles and live English voice-overs. . . . ¶ Feb. 22 at 6 and Feb. 25 at 2: "Bigger Than Life" (1956, Nicholas Ray), with James Mason. . . . ¶ Feb. 23 at 2:30: "America America" (†). . . . ¶ Feb. 23-24 and March 1-5: The museum will be showing the five films nominated for Academy Awards in each of the following categories: animated, live-action, and documentary shorts; feature-length documentary; and foreign-language. . . . ¶ Feb. 23 at 6 and Feb. 24 at 2:30: "A Personal Journey with Martin Scorsese Through American Movies" (1995, Scorsese and Michael Henry Wilson). . . . ¶ Feb. 25 at 5 and Feb. 26 at 2:30: "Silver Lode" (1954, Allan Dwan), with John Payne. . . . ¶ Feb. 26 at 6 and Feb. 27 at 2:30: "Force of Evil" (1948, Abraham Polansky), with John Garfield. . . . ¶ Feb. 26 at 6:30: "Trying to Kiss the Moon" (1994). Directed by Steve Dwoskin, who will be present. . . . ¶ Feb. 29 at 2 and 6: "Andersonville" (1996, John Frankenheimer), with Jarrod Emick, Frederic Forrest, and Cliff de Young. . . . ¶ Feb. 29 at 3: "Photo Wallahs" (1991, David and Judith MacDougall). . . . ¶ Feb. 29 at 6: "Time of the Barmen" (1993, David MacDougall). . . . ¶ March 1 at 8 and March 2 at 2:30: "I Am Curious, Film" (1995, Stig Björkman; in Swedish). . . . ¶ March 4 at 6:30: Films by Donna Cameron, who will be present.



At MOMA, films starring Asta Nielsen.

GISELLE POTTER

Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center, 165 W. 65th St., plaza level (875-5600)—Polish cinema, from 1930 to the present; all films in Polish, with English subtitles. Feb. 21 at 2 and 8:15: "Man of Iron" (1983, Andrzej Wajda). . . . Feb. 21 at 6: "Without Anesthesia" (1979, Wajda). . . . Feb. 22 at 6:30 and 8:30: "Clear Through" (1975, Gerzgorz Krolikiewicz). . . . Feb. 23 at 2 and 6:15: "Top Dog" (1978, Feliks Falk). . . . Feb. 23 at 4:15 and 8:30: "Transfiguration Hospital" (1979, Edward Zebrowski). . . . Feb. 24 at 4 and 7:45: "Camouflage" (1977, Krzysztof Zanussi). . . . Feb. 24 at 6 and 9:45 and Feb. 25 at 7:30: "Foul Play" (1976, Marek Piwowski). . . . Feb. 25 at 4: "Nights and Days" (1975, Jerzy Antczak). . . . Feb. 27 at 2 and Feb. 28 at 4:15 and 8:45: "Camera Buff" (1980, Krzysztof Kieslowski). . . . Feb. 27 at 4:10 and Feb. 28 at 2 and 6:30: "Blind Chance" (1981, Kieslowski). . . . Feb. 27 at 7: "Underground" (1995, Emir Kusturica). . . . Feb. 29 at 2 and 6:15 and March 1 at 4: "A Woman Alone" (1981, Agnieszka Holland). . . . Feb. 29 at 4 and 8:15 and March 1 at 2 and 6:15: "Shivers" (1981, Wojciech Marczewski). . . . March 1 at 8:15 and 10, March 2 at 7, March 3 at 6:45, March 4 at 4 and 8:30, and March 5 at 4: "Crows" (1994, Dorota Kedzierzawska). . . . March 2 at 4:45 and 8:45: "Sex Mission" (1984, Juliusz Machulski). . . . March 3 at 4:45 and 8:30 and March 5 at 2: "Austeria" (1983, Jerzy Kawalerowicz). . . . March 4 at 2: "Sunday Pranks" (1987, Robert Glinski). . . . ¶ Weekend showings for children. Feb. 24-25 at 2: "Greystoke: The Legend of Tarzan, Lord of the Apes" (1984, Hugh Hudson), with Christopher Lambert. . . . March 2-3 at 2: "The Great Race" (1965, Blake Edwards), with Tony Curtis, Natalie Wood, and Jack Lemmon.

A Different Light Bookstore, 151 W. 19th St. (989-4850)—A Sunday-night series of free films (and popcorn). On Feb. 25 at 7, the feature will be "What's Love Got to Do with It" (1993, Brian Gibson), with Angela Bassett and Laurence Fishburne; on March 3 at 7, "Now, Voyager" (†).

Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (864-5400)—Feb. 27 at 7: "Black Narcissus" (†). . . . Feb. 27 at 9: "Sunrise" (1927, F. W. Murnau; silent), with Janet Gaynor, George O'Brien, and Margaret Livingston. . . . March 5 at 7: "Olympiad" (1938, Leni Riefenstahl), a documentary.

Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St (355-6160)—Feb. 27 at 12:30, 3:15, 6, and 8:45: "Panique" (†). . . . March 5 at 12:30, 3:15, 6, and 8:45: "L'Argent" (1984, Robert Bresson; in French).

American Museum of the Moving Image, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (1-718 784-0077)—Feb. 21-23 at 2: "Babe" (1995, Chris Noonan). . . . ¶ Films by Martin Scorsese. Feb. 24 at 2: "Raging Bull" (1980). . . . Feb. 24 at 4:30: "The Last Temptation of Christ" (1988). . . . Feb. 25 at 2: "The King of Comedy" (†). . . . Feb. 25 at 4:30: "Italianamerican" (1974) and "American Boy: A Profile of Steven Prince" (1978). . . . ¶ March 2 at 2: "Get Shorty" (1995, Barry Sonnenfeld). . . . ¶ March 2 at 5: "A Little Princess" (1995, Alfonso Cuaron). . . . ¶ March 3 at 2: "Georgia" (1995, Ulu Grosbard).

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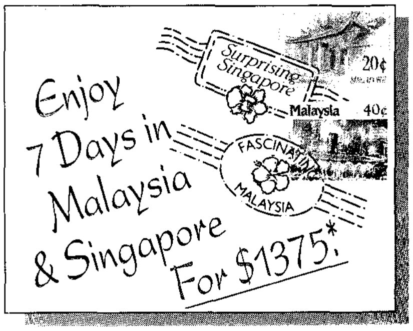

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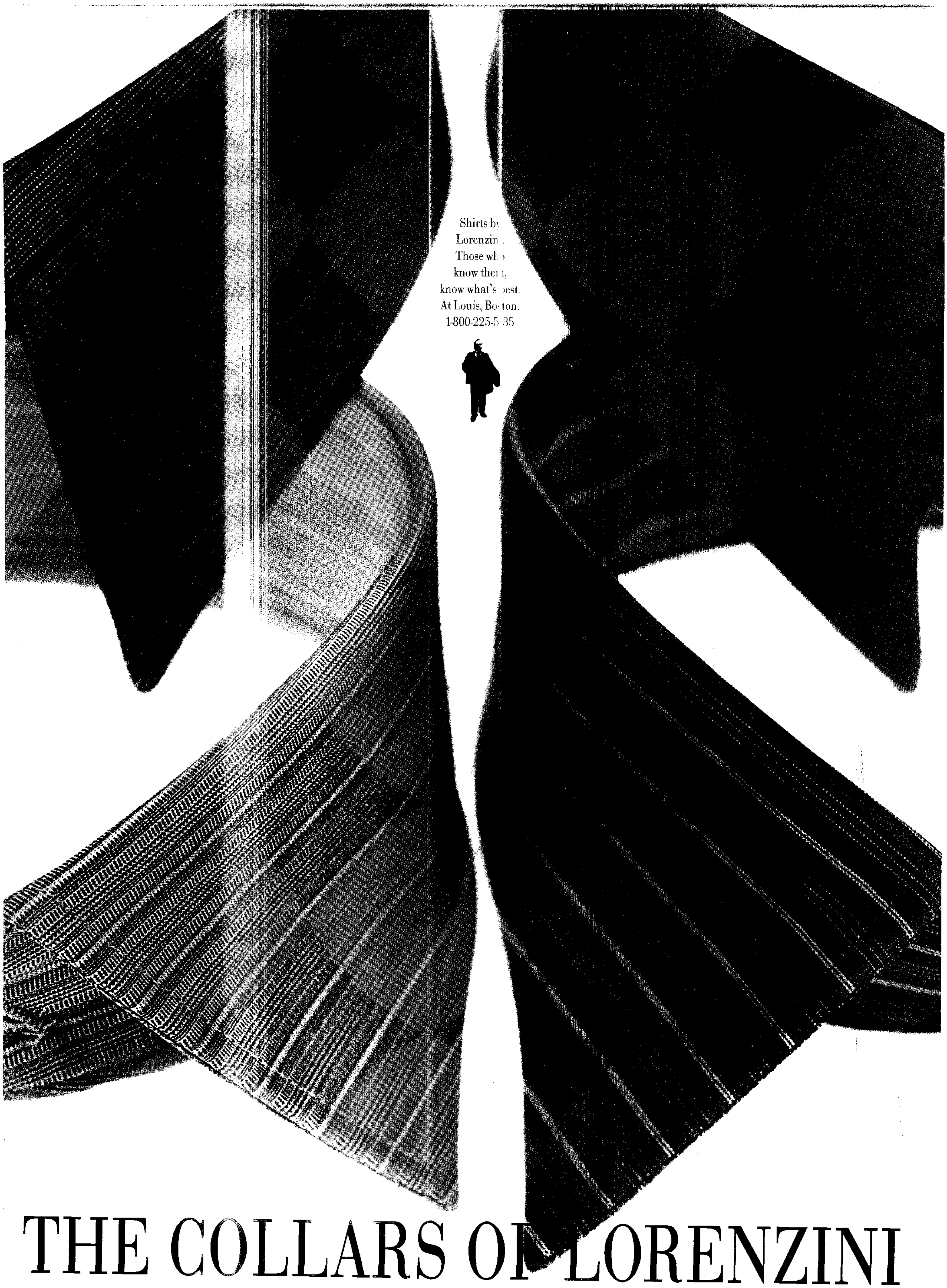

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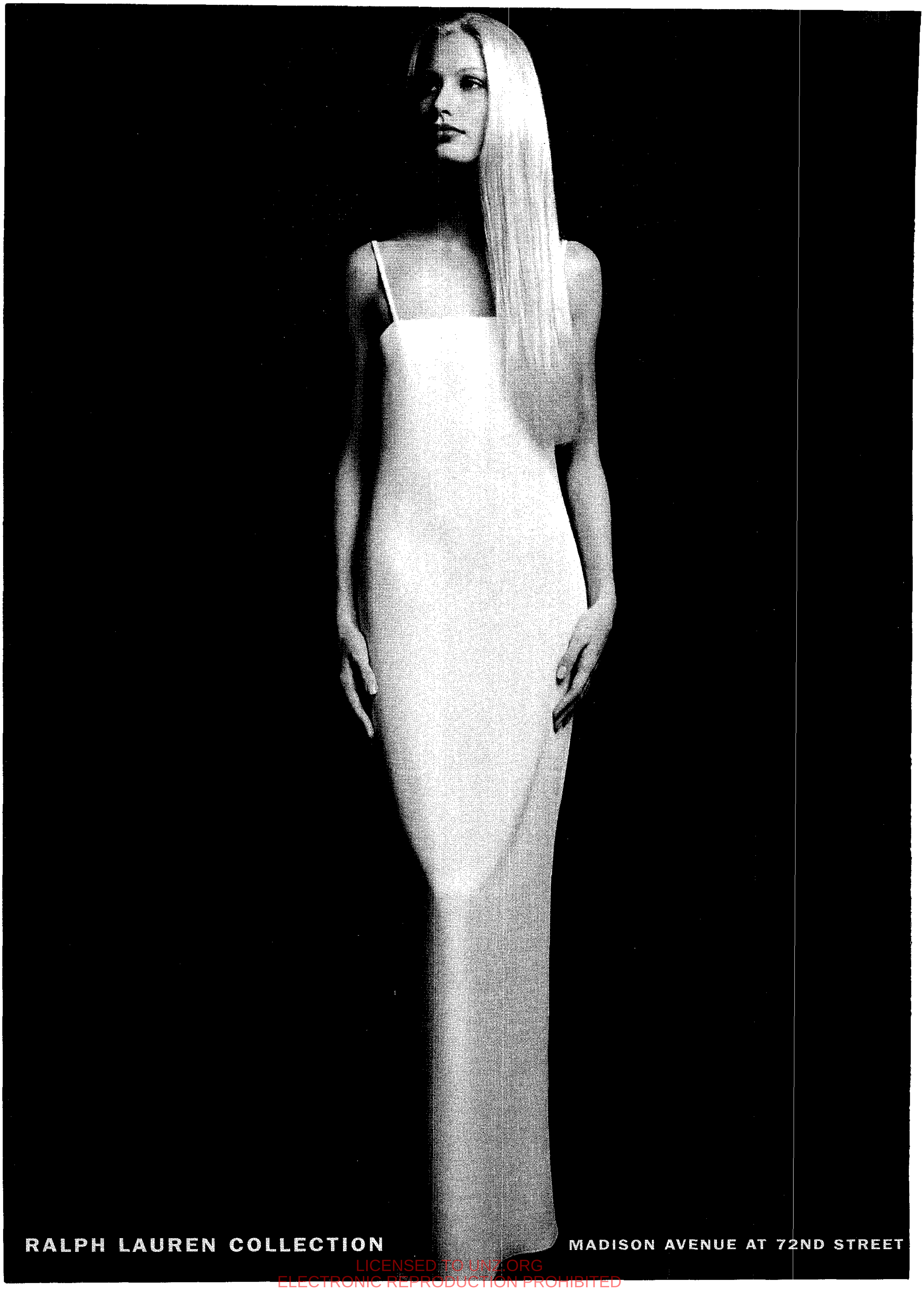
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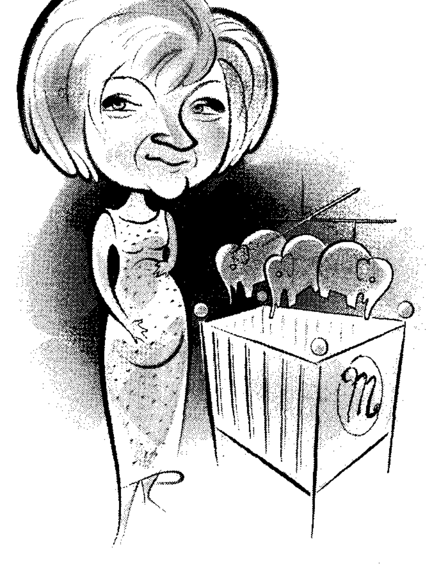
"THERE'S no *doubt* that there's a culture shock," exclaims Congresswoman Susan Molinari as she sits up from the depths of a leather armchair in her Capitol Hill office, straining the knit fabric of a black-and-white-striped sweater-and-jumper set over a gently pregnant belly. "I go to a state where no one wears black, they don't talk with their hands, they all have bolo ties—I think, I got to get *out* of here." The short blond Staten Islander, whose own choice of the color smacks more of a taste for the easy-to-clean than of the Gothic sensibility of lower Manhattanites, is reënacting scenes from her trip out West in 1994 to campaign for the Republican Party. She is also dancing around a question: How could she, whose reputation as an urban moderate rests largely on a commitment to abortion rights, have stumped for such fiercely pro-life congressional candidates as Utah's Enid Waldholz, Oregon's Bill Witt, and Oklahoma's Thomas Coburn?

Molinari eventually produces an answer—party loyalty—but a nervous edge is palpable. Nineteen ninety-four was also the year Molinari married the arch-conservative pro-lifer Bill Paxon, who heads the Republican National Congressional Committee, and the year she won the vice-chairmanship of the House Republican Conference. Now she's No. 5 in Newt Gingrich's inner circle and a central figure in her party's campaign to win the female swing vote. Just by being there and being her telegenic, class-president self, she makes the bitterest of health-care and welfare cuts palatable. Even her baby girl, due in mid-May, is partisan currency: "It sends a very effective message through a very affable messenger that the House is family-friendly," one pollster says. But while playing cheerleader for the Republican revolution has been great for Molinari, it has been less unambiguously good for some of her supporters.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY ERIC PALMA

One group that is increasingly wondering how loudly to complain is the women's lobby. "She's distanced herself from us," says a policy analyst at the NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund. "She's made that real clear. On the other hand, of all the Republicans who've run from us, she's run the most slowly." In fact, Molinari has proceeded with remarkable finesse. She's been meticulous at splitting the difference between her pro-choice stand and the demands of her new job. On Valentine's Day last year, she voted against funds to protect abortion clinics but in favor of more security wherever "a threat to law and order exists." Several months later, after the Republicans put on a quasi-medical sideshow to drum up opposition to late-term abortions (the euphemism of the moment was "partial-birth abortion"), she voted to ban the procedure—but she did try to keep her party from extending the ban to life-threatening cases.

Susan Molinari

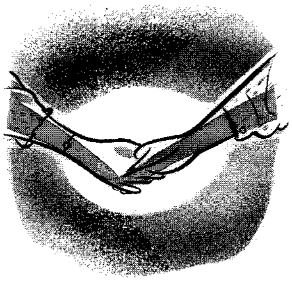


Wishy-washy? Sure, but consistent with the strategy Molinari says she must employ if she is to remain an effective insider: quibble over details in private and close ranks in public. Some abortion advocates, however, are not sure whether to view such behavior as that of an insider or of a traitor. "The reason it feels so bad with a Susan Molinari is that we counted on her as a friend, or at least respected her stand for choice," says Kate Michelman, president of the National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League.

THE wrath of abortion lobbyists like Michelman could be dangerous for Molinari: when and if the "pro-choice" label stops sticking to Molinari, the "moderate" label will probably peel off, too. She actually lies right of center on most social issues, according to a recent vote study by the *National Journal*, and is "more liberal than 0 per cent of the House on economic issues." (By contrast, the staunchly pro-choice Republican Constance Morella rates seventy-five per cent on social issues and fifty-five per cent on economic ones.) Not even by the informal sociology of congressional alliances can Molinari be classified as a moderate. She has never attended a meeting of the Tuesday Lunch Bunch, a group of Republican centrists who gather weekly, and at least one Republican colleague sees her less as a bona-fide independent than as a good excuse—"a convenient tool for the leadership to say that we have a moderate in our ranks."

The line between Molinari the right-winger's favorite moderate and Molinari the right-winger is a fine one; should it vanish altogether, Molinari could lose the backing of her constituents. Staten Island may be more conservative than the rest of the city, but it is far from the extremism of the current Republican leadership. No wonder she's so defensive. "Frankly, by being a pro-choice Republican in the leadership I have probably fought harder and undergone more controversy than anyone who has ensconced themselves in a relationship with only pro-choice advocates," she declares. "I don't feel I have to apologize to anybody."

MY HUSBAND'S FIRST WIFE



THE nurse came down the hospital corridor bearing a large bundle. "It's a boy," she said, holding him out to the two of us who stood there. We grinned in tandem: the first boy in this generation of the family had just been born. "Who wants him?" the nurse asked.

"Give him to her," I said, gesturing to my right.

"Oh, we'll share," my companion said, happily swooping up the baby.

There we stood cooing down at him, his sixty-seven-year-old grandmother and his forty-five-year-old step-grandmother. Between us, we'd been married to the same man for forty years—the baby's grandfather, who had gone off to put money in the parking meter. The arcs of our lives seemed to converge in that corridor, all the years of being unwittingly tethered in one of life's most delicate relationships: that of the first wife and the inevitably younger second wife. Out of that forced connection, we were left to strike some civil, workable accord, mostly for the benefit of the four young stepsons I inherited as a baby-faced twenty-two-year-old bride back in the early nineteen-seventies.

Now, twenty-three years later, as the two of us huddled together admiring the baby, I felt a shiver of pride at how well we had acquitted ourselves—she in particular—and wondered if she felt the same. I feel sure she did. I know her some now, and I would go so far as to say that we have a peculiar friendship, one of a painful yet optimistic sort (the optimism born of the sense that children of divorce can have decent lives if the adults behave well). But unlike my other female friendships, which are full of high-decibel banter and revelations, this one is based on all that we don't say, all that we have never said to each other over a quarter century. We have dealt intimately in the mundane, the details: holidays and graduations and sports meets and shirt sizes. Later, there were the more troubling calls: school problems and drug busts and car accidents. Later still, happy talk of marriages and pregnancies and job promotions. She and I chatted politely through it all, always being careful and correct, navigating around the slowly healing wound, the family fracture, that had bound us together. In the last couple of years, jokes have leaked in. We have rolled our eyes in concert over given incidents, in-laws, the foibles of the man to whom we have both been married. All this passed through my mind as we stood there together, both wearing glasses now, our hair flashed with gray.

I assumed she knew that my marriage to her ex-husband, though enduring, had been tumultuous and not without its own pain. I assumed she had some inkling of the sharp stab of longing I felt looking down at the newborn because I had not been able to have children of my own. She might have figured there was some poetic justice in that, not in a mean way, just in a fatalistic sort of way. I know I did. But again, it certainly wasn't something we would ever talk about, and I was grateful once more for the silence—the restful, respectful silence with which we had to conduct our odd and eminently civilized relationship.

Civilized. A strange word perhaps for the bargain struck between a first and second wife, but if the women do not yield to the all-too-natural tendency to push and pull, to resent or pity—or hate—then it is a bargain of the highest sort, because it is made in the name of others: the children and, beyond, the family. That's what we were now, ineluctably: a family. This was an ensemble act. And we had pulled it off quite well. She pulled it off. The tone was hers to set; I was the interloping ingénue. Once again, I took my lead from her.

"Here," she said, handing me the baby.—ANNE TAYLOR FLEMING

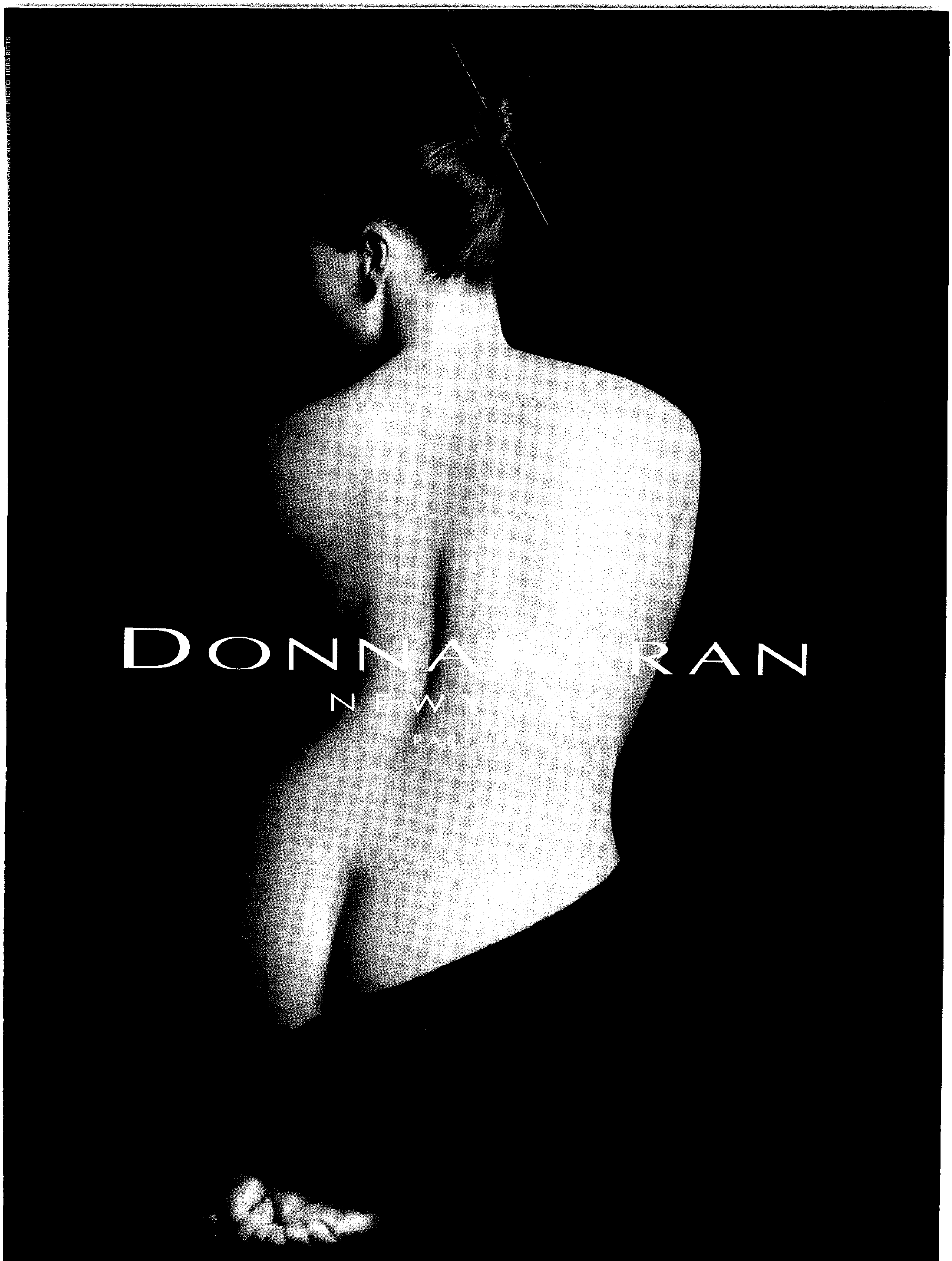
DREAM WEAVER

YOU might not expect to find the city's top hair weaver perched above a Chinese restaurant on West Seventy-second Street—Jade River Palace, to be exact—but if you were Naomi Campbell, Whitney Houston, Mary J. Blige, Angela Bassett, Robin Givens, or Oprah Winfrey, you'd be a client of Ellin LaVar and you'd know that's exactly where LaVar Hair Designs is located.

On a recent afternoon, LaVar was tightly binding the natural hair of a middle-aged, heavily made-up white woman to the top of her head in a grid pattern and using a long, crescent-shaped hook to sew wefts—essentially, bands of human hair that resemble miniature hula skirts—onto the grid. Once LaVar finished sewing on a number of wefts, she washed, cut, and styled the woman's hair. The woman, who had come in a few hours earlier with long, straight (weave) hair, left with shoulder-length, curly (weave) hair. And about six hundred fewer dollars.

Several years ago, all a black comedian needed to do to send a room into hysterics was to call out to "all the girls in the house with the *real* hair!" In the nineties, the quality of weaves has improved, making them harder to detect, and many women have them done just out of convenience. "The stigma went with people thinking that those of us who have weaves have no hair," LaVar explained, pointing out that a few of her clients are chemotherapy patients or suffer from male-pattern baldness. "A lot of the models and celebrities get their hair done to protect it from all the wear and tear from curling irons and blow-dryers."

LaVar, who is "older than twenty-five, not older than thirty-five," has deep-brown skin and straight, shoulder-length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chestnut-brown hair (yes, it's a weave). She grew up in Mount Vernon and the Bronx. "When I was in my teens, the primary clients that I had were nothing but drug dealers," she said. "Girls who deal or whose boyfriends deal. That was my celebrity clientele. They came in and got their hair done almost every week, and if So-and-So had the same style, they had to come back and change it."

In 1991, LaVar received her most challenging celebrity request: to do her final job on a longtime client, Miles Davis. "I'd never done anybody's hair that was dead," she said. "I was afraid at first. What I ended up doing was, I bought a wig that was curly, and then I weaved on a piece to make his natural widow's-peak hairline. But at the funeral parlor, when I looked at him in the casket, I got angry. They had made up Miles and had put orange shimmery lipstick on him. And I said, 'Y'all better get that lipstick off his lips, cuz if he was here he would cuss!' " LaVar paused, and, with a slight swivel of her neck and a sideways flip of her hair, she shot out the punch line in one breath: " 'Allyouniggersout!' " She laughed. "From there, I could do his hair."

REVENGE OF THE EX-MISTRESS

Dear X—
Finally met your wife
in Beef & Beer.
She hates it that you let me
pierce your ear, and time
you lost to me she guessed.
Still, we fell in love.
Please send her clothes
to my address. Best
wishes, no regrets.
—Another X

—Mary Karr

A NEW QUEEN IN THE KINGDOM

At last year's N.B.A. All-Star game, Geraldine Laybourne was seated one row ahead of Michael Ovitz. For almost anyone in the entertainment business—and particularly for a television executive who had never met the then chairman of Creative Artists Agency—that would have been an irresistible opportunity to schmooze. Laybourne, however, chatted almost exclusively with Eric Ovitz, age nine. Ovitz *père* was impressed. His son, he recalls, was thrilled: "When Eric learned that Gerry was the head of Nickelodeon, he didn't care about anyone else. To him, she was the biggest star there."

Six months later, when Ovitz became president of the Walt Disney Company just as it was merging with Capital Cities/ABC, the first call he made was to Laybourne. And the married forty-eight-year-old mother of two agreed to end her fifteen-year stint at Nickelodeon and become president of the Disney/ABC Cable Networks. In her new position, Laybourne will be the most visible female executive in broadcasting and, if past performance is any guide, a change agent. "I hope she will put us in places we've never been," Michael Eisner, Disney's C.E.O, says.

Holed up in her apartment overlooking Central Park while she mended from a skiing injury, Laybourne seemed too mild a personality for such an exalted status or such a catalytic role. She was "the middle daughter, the quiet one," who dressed up to watch TV because she believed it could see her. But her stockbroker father was "a feminist whose idea of a summer job was putting me in charge of his back office, clearing trades," and her mother was "an arts terrorist, who taught us from an early age that we had to do something important." All she needed was a focus, and in children she found it.

Geraldine Laybourne

Her methods were direct, innovative, and shockingly practical. In 1984, when she was put in charge of Nickelodeon on a trial basis, Laybourne discussed her mission with her colleagues, gathered agreement, and fired the naysayers so the others could get on with it; seven months later, her corporate parents dropped their executive search and anointed her. She shared information, listened, took risks, and defended her people until her department heads felt they owned their part of the business and, consequently, produced remarkable results. When she won her first award and was asked to identify her mentors so they could be part of the ceremony, she submitted the names of three of her employees. More recently, confronted with changes in corporate architecture, she created a redesign that saw her and her key associates working in an open space behind the receptionist.

Laybourne credits at least some of her success to the few men who tried to slow her down. "When women complain to me about bad bosses," she says, "I tell them, 'You're so lucky. Just watch and, when it's your turn, do the opposite. Your worst boss is your best teacher.' "

FORGET ABOUT SHIRTS AND SKINS

The most pristine building in Sarajevo these days, standing right in the center of the war-smashed city, is a refurbished riverside mansion housing the embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Now, Bosnia's Muslims are a notably secular group, and thoroughly European. But persecution and attempted genocide have a way of intensifying religious identity—a tendency that the Iranians, who helped the Bosnians defend themselves in the darkest years of the war, hope to exploit, even as the Americans try to force them out of the Bosnian picture. On the Iranian embassy's front wall, in a glass display case, is a set of brochures extolling, presumably for the benefit of those women who survived the war, the status of women in today's Iran. Those shown in the photographs are all wearing the traditional chador, but, according to the text, they are active members of society. In sports, for instance, women happily participate in skiing, chess, fencing, judo, squash, and basketball. "In the Islamic system," one brochure explains, "sport serves as one of the best means that helps women better fulfill their holy motherhood duties, educate and present healthy generations to the community." The display case does not seem to interest many passing Sarajevans. But what could be better, really, after a war, than presenting healthy generations to the community? Veiled basketball, anyone? ♦

"A G.O.P. Poster Child," Judith Shulevitz; "Dream Weaver," Touré; "A New Queen in the Kingdom," Jesse Kornbluth; "Forget About Shirts and Skins," William Finnegan.

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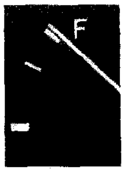

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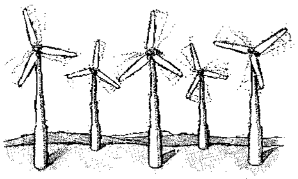

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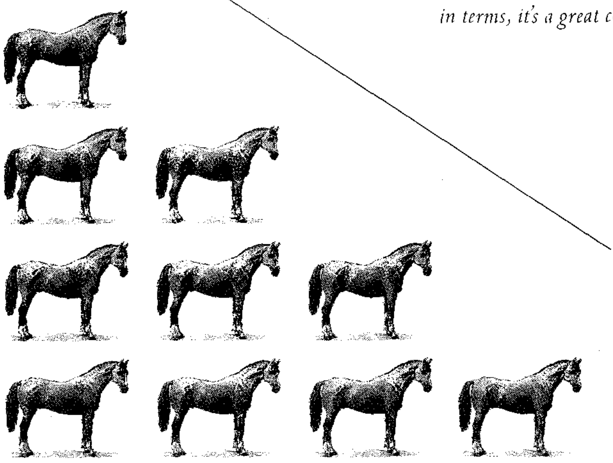

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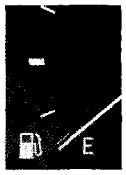

The Lexus LS 400

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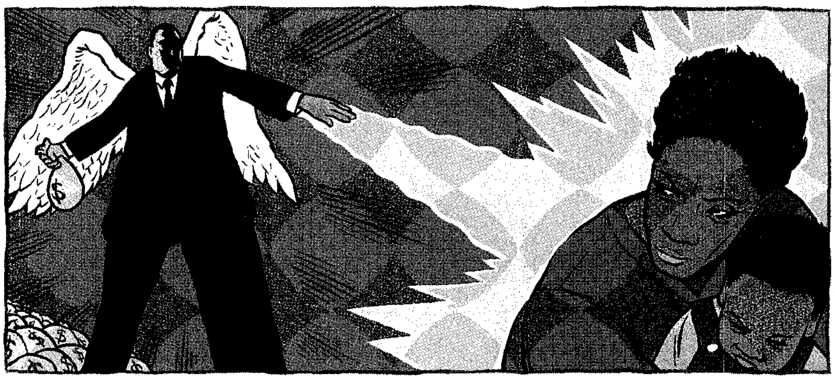
DEPT. OF DISPUTATION

DEVIL WOMEN

With a little imagination, poor women can be blamed for just about everything.

BY KATHA POLLITT

Q: DURING one debate, members of Congress referred to women who receive welfare as "wolves" and "alligators." Why?


MARK ZINGARELLI

A: Representatives Barbara Cubin (R-Wyo.) and John L. Mica (R-Fla.) were undoubtedly thinking of the ways in which such women resemble wild carnivorous animals: the wolf, padding along the derelict, moonlit boulevards of the ruined city, tongue lolling, eyes shining; the alligator, its torpid bulk stretched out beneath the bayou mud, jaws firmly clamped around the national treasury.

Q: Isn't that rather harsh?

A: The use of metaphor has a long and distinguished history in political oratory: Cicero, Disraeli, Churchill . . .

Q: But federal spending on Aid to Families with Dependent Children is only twelve billion two hundred million dollars—one per cent of federal spending. Payments to corporations are a hundred and sixty-seven billion dollars a year.

A: Money invested in corporate well-being creates wealth. Money given to poor mothers and children creates poverty.

Q: How does it do that?

A: By encouraging non-middle-class values. As Robert Rector, of the Heritage Foundation, likes to point out, merely living with a mother who receives welfare lowers a child's I.Q. by twenty points.

Q: Really? I thought I.Q. was supposed to be genetic. In "The Bell Curve" Charles Murray claims that "welfare mothers come mainly from the lower reaches of the distribution of cognitive ability." He thinks unwed mothers should be denied support—that's the only sort of message low-I.Q. women can understand.

A: Charles Murray is with the American Enterprise Institute. That's a different outfit.

Q: Murray writes, "It has become much more difficult for a person of low cognitive ability to figure out why marriage is a good thing, and, once in a marriage, more difficult to figure out why one should stick with it through bad times." Isn't he divorced? If *he* couldn't figure out how to stay married, it must really be tough.

A: Mr. Murray's personal life is beyond the scope of this discussion.

Q: But aren't lots of women on welfare because of divorce? A couple has kids, she quits work or goes part time, the marriage breaks up and he stiffs her on child support, and she's stuck, with her rusty skills and spotty work history, in the low-end-of-the-female-job ghetto—only, she's still got the kids to take care of, so she can't go to work, because child care would eat up her whole paycheck.

A: It's true that about half the women on welfare at any one time are there because of divorce. That's one rea-

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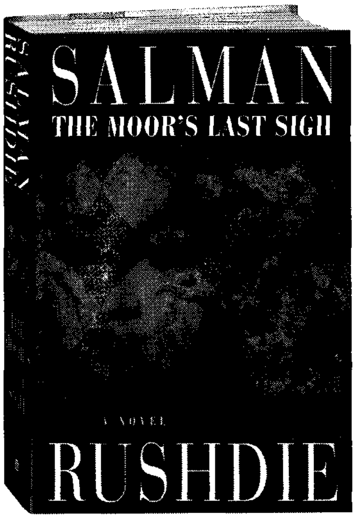

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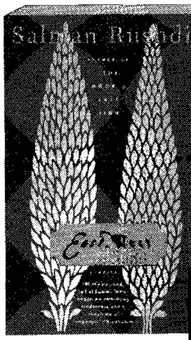

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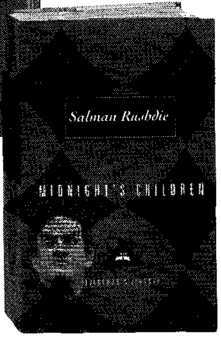

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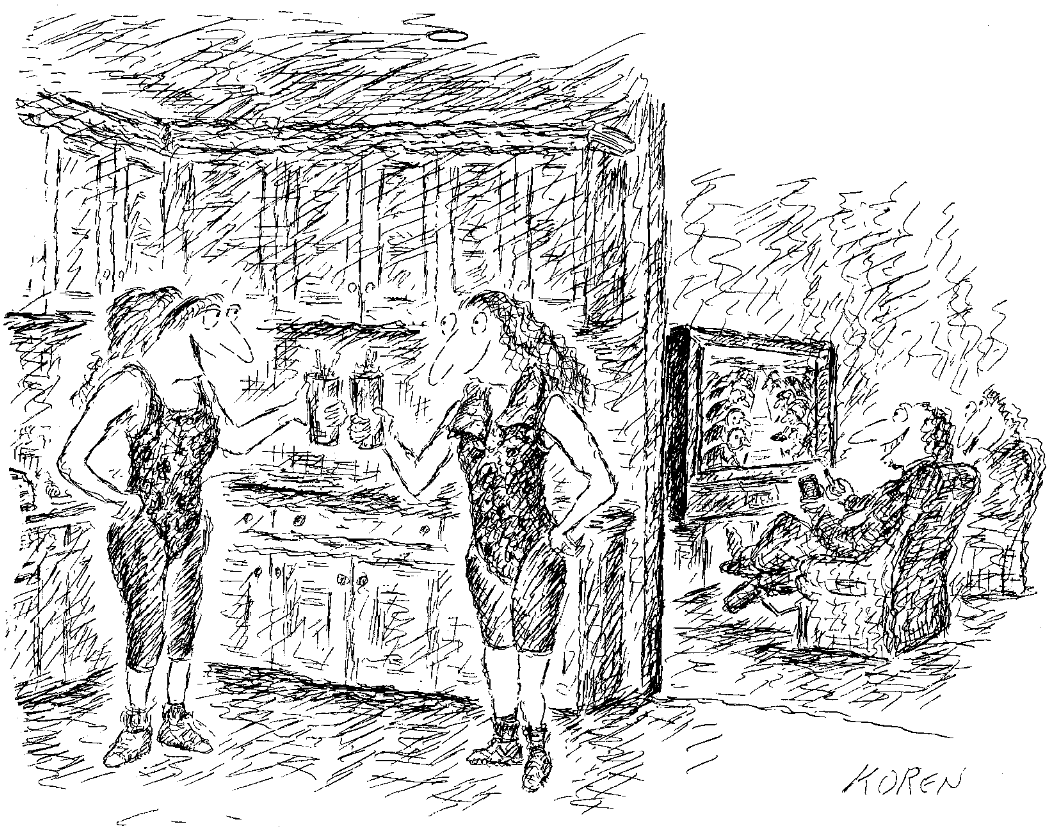

"Here's to wellness—women's wellness!"

• •

son we need to keep couples together: abolishing no-fault divorce, requiring counselling and waiting periods . . .

Q: But isn't it true that most divorced women don't stay on welfare very long? In fact, only fifteen per cent of all women who go on welfare remain on it continuously for five years or more. That's not a lot of people, really. And it's not as though they get a lot of money, either.

A: A paper out from the Cato Institute establishes that women on welfare in New York receive the equivalent of a salary of twenty-seven thousand three hundred dollars; in Hawaii, it's thirty-six thousand four hundred.

Q: But wasn't that figure derived by adding up all the benefits a mother might hypothetically receive if she fitted every possible criterion? Nobody really gets that much. The average amount of money a woman on welfare with two children receives is three hundred and seventy-three dollars a month; in Mississippi, it's a hundred and twenty dollars. Just try to live on that, even with food stamps and Medicaid. And welfare levels have been declining, too. The average grant today is worth a little more than half the average grant in 1970. That's nothing!

A: Federal spending alone is enough to buy every man, woman, and child in America a Big Mac once a month—with fries. But welfare reform is not about money. It's about values. It's about fighting the culture of instant gratification, which produces unwed motherhood—which is the driving force behind poverty, crime, low S.A.T. scores, unemployment, drug use, child abuse, infant mortality, urban decay, and rap music. That's why the media have started replacing sixties-style terms like "out of wedlock" children and "nonmarital" births with old-fashioned terms like "illegitimate." Indeed, as far back as 1994, Mickey Kaus, of *The New Republic*, used the word "bastards" in the *Wall Street Journal*.

Q: It sounds so nineteenth-century.

A: Exactly. According to the historian Gertrude Himmelfarb, the author of "The De-Moralization of Society," the Victorian era had much to recommend it: Morals were clear. People knew where they stood. The deserving poor received hand-knit socks and jars of calf's-foot jelly. Newt Gingrich called "The De-Moralization of Society" a "great book."

Q: But didn't he leave his first wife for a younger woman and skip out on child support? I read that her church had to take up a collection for her and the kids.

A: A beautiful example of charity in action. But the Speaker's marital arrangements are beyond the scope of this discussion.

Q: Lots of women on welfare want to work. But the jobs they can get pay too little. The minimum wage is only four dollars and twenty-five cents an hour—and that's worth only two-thirds of what the minimum wage was worth in 1968. Low-wage jobs rarely carry health insurance; what's more, it costs money to go to work—transportation, clothes, child care. So a welfare mother actually can lose money by going to work.

A: As *The New Republic* recently pointed out, you cannot measure in mere dollars the importance to children of seeing that their mother is a productive member of society. Besides, as states lower their welfare grants the comparative worth of minimum-wage labor will go up.

Q: But that won't produce more jobs, will it? More than seven and a half million people are out of work, and more than four million part-timers would rather have full-time jobs. My niece was Phi Bete at U. Mass., and she's selling aromatherapy candles at street fairs.

A: The general state of the economy is beyond the scope of this discussion. Anne Applebaum, an American journalist living in London, has an idea, though, and the Independent Women's Forum, a conservative group that counts as members the wives of such Republican Party notables as Phil Gramm and Michael Ledeen, liked it so much they published it in their magazine. Applebaum suggests that tax breaks could enable middle-class people to hire more servants. Thus, by a single manipulation of the tax code upscale women could solve their child-care and housework

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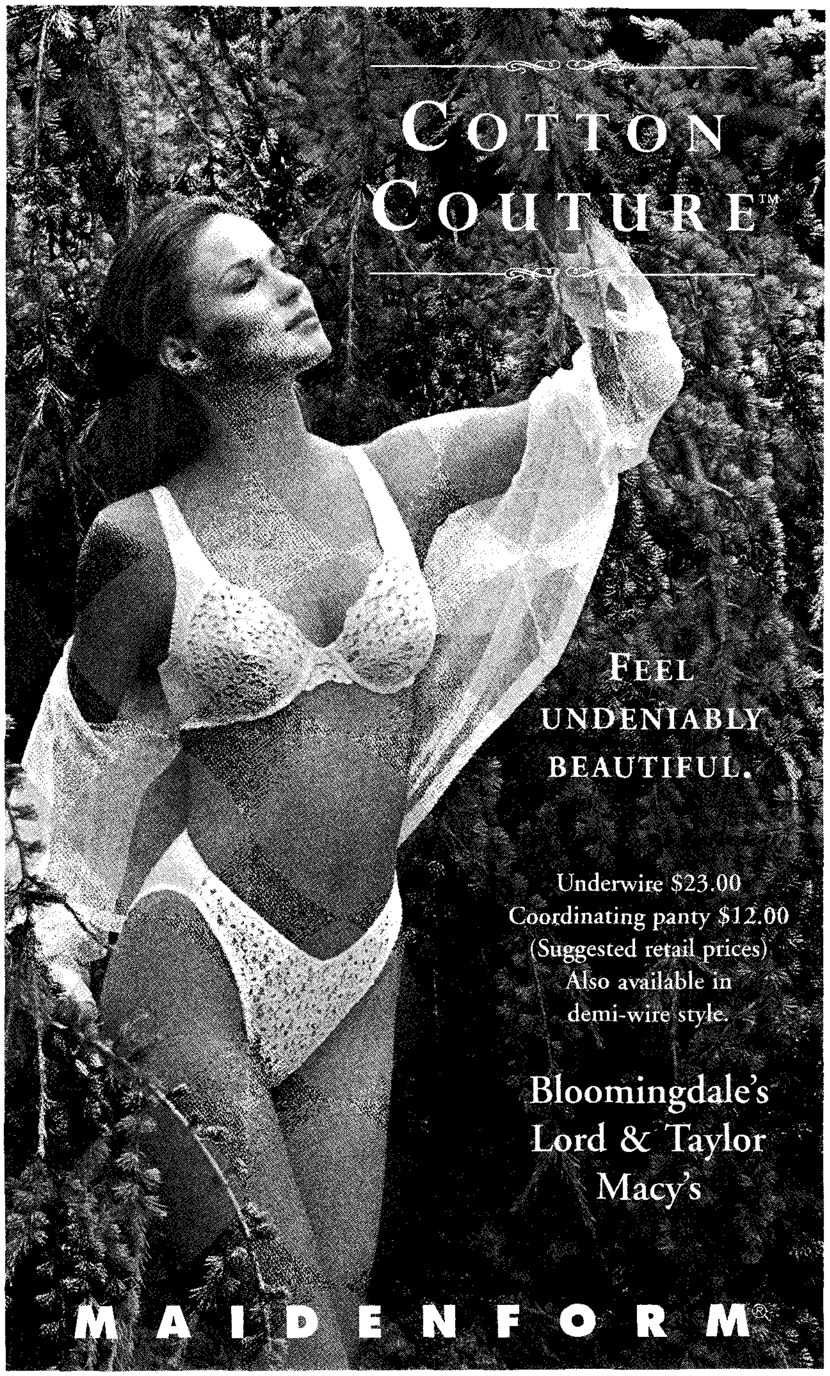
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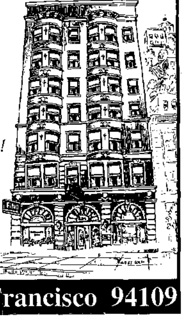
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problems and welfare mothers could find employment.

Q: But wouldn't the welfare moms lower the I.Q.s of the children of the upscale women?

A: Poor women have been taking care of the children of the affluent for centuries without ill effect. It seems that it is only with one's own children that the I.Q.-lowering mechanism is activated.

Q: Let me see if I've got this straight: poor women are bad mothers if they stay home, and middle-class women are bad mothers if they go out to work. Danielle Crittenden, also with the Independent Women's Forum, wrote an Op-Ed piece in the *Times* in which she said that after her first baby was born she made only eight hundred dollars for the whole year, because "biological fact" made her just want to get off the fast track. Wasn't *she doing exactly the same job taking* care of her baby that a welfare mom is doing?

A: Ms. Crittenden's private life is beyond the scope of this discussion. It is most unlikely, however, that her baby's I.Q. was lowered by her contact with it.

Q: If welfare produces crime and bad test scores and promiscuity, how come it hasn't had that effect in Europe? In France and Scandinavia, mothers get all sorts of benefits whether or not they're married and regardless of income: paid maternity leave, job protection, day care, cash supplements, free health care, help with housing, and more.

A: Those are homogeneous countries. It's different.

Q: What are you saying? That they're all-white?

A: According to William J. Bennett, the compiler of "The Book of Virtues," poor Americans live better than "the general population" in Western Europe. They "live in larger houses or apartments, eat more meat, and are more likely to own cars and dishwashers," he wrote, citing an essay by Robert Rector, who argues that what the man in the street considers poverty—hunger and malnutrition, for instance—does not exist in America. Indeed, the so-called poor are more likely to be overweight.

Q: You've been talking as if the U.S. welfare state were so big and the fact that people were still poor proves it's a

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failure. But Western Europe spends a lot more than we do, and it's worked. The U.S. has the largest gap between rich and poor, the biggest percentage of children in poverty.

A: The social-welfare democracies of Western Europe are beyond the scope of this discussion. In any case, Marvin Olasky, who is a senior fellow with the Progress and Freedom Foundation, a think tank associated with Newt Gingrich, claims that our problems are not economic but "theological." He admires the Christian philanthropic societies of the nineteenth century, which strove to reform the poor, not just give them handouts. He was particularly moved by the so-called orphan trains, which shipped poor children from the teeming cities of the East Coast to the fertile farmlands of the Midwest, where they could make themselves useful bringing in the crops. Unfortunately, the streamlining of Amtrak routes makes this an impractical solution today. Olasky and Arianna Huffington have been visiting neighborhood charities in Washington, D.C., and they are very, very impressed.

Q: But, according to Robert Rector, poverty doesn't exist. So who is the charity for?

A: Even the meat-eating possessors of large apartments complete with dishwashers have problems. With their weight, for example. Perhaps there is a place for Christian diet centers in inner-city neighborhoods. "Abstinence—it's not just for the bedroom anymore." That sort of thing.

Q: The Catholic bishops say philanthropy can't replace government programs.

A: That is because they are thinking of "material poverty." But the real problem today is behavioral poverty, spiritual poverty—the kind of poverty that is, paradoxically, produced by giving poor people money.

Q: So having less money will make people more virtuous?

A: In 1920, fifty per cent of the country was classified as poor. Rates of illegitimacy were negligible, a hundred and fifty plays opened on Broadway, and Mary Pickford was America's sweetheart. Today, fifteen per cent of the country is poor, nearly a third of its children are born to single mothers, and, even if you have premium cable, it seems like there's never anything good on.

Q: You seem obsessed with this out-of-wedlock thing. My sister had a baby with her boyfriend, and Tommy is just this wonderful little boy. My parents would have had a fit if Mona had given him up for adoption after Harry moved in with that policewoman. Besides, rates of out-of-wedlock childbearing are increasing all over the world. How can the American welfare system be producing births to single mothers in Ireland and India?

A: We are still a very powerful country. But bastardy rates around the globe are beyond the scope of this discussion.

Q: I've read that voters are rejecting the Gingrich revolution. Now that President Clinton has vetoed the welfare bill, maybe nothing will happen.

A: There is bipartisan agreement that illegitimacy and promiscuity are the source of our problems as a nation. Thirty-five of the forty-six Democratic senators voted in favor of the welfare bill originally proposed by Senate Republicans, including four of the five Democratic women senators. That bill ends the federal commitment to provide cash aid to all needy families and gives the money to the states to use as they see fit. They can deny aid to teen-age mothers and to women who have additional children while on welfare; they can use the money to set up orphanages or adoption networks or to pay church groups to run abstinence programs—whatever. President Clinton has said he will sign this bill if Congress presents it to him.

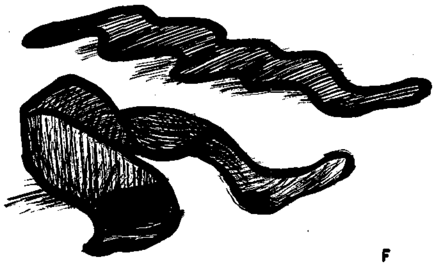
Q: I can't believe I'm hearing this.

A: In her new book Hillary Clinton says young people should abstain from sex until they're twenty-one.

Q: What about President Clinton's jokes about the fun he had in the back of his van as a student?

A: The First Lady also writes that she opposes divorce.

Q: And hasn't Charles Murray boasted about going to prostitutes when he was in the Peace Corps in Thailand? He could have dozens of children there selling loose cigarettes on the sidewalk and he wouldn't even know.



A: In "The Bell Curve" Murray demonstrates that the I.Q. of Asians is high.

Q: What you really want is to bring back the double standard, isn't it? Virginity is good, abortion is bad, pregnant girls are sluts who should give up their babies for adoption. But what about the study done in Washington State that said that two-thirds of pregnant teens have been sexually molested or raped?

A: You'll find that illegitimacy is rampant in that study population.

Q: Illegitimacy causes rape?

A: According to *Newsweek*, the decline of shame has led to a variety of forms of moral breakdown. Amitai Etzioni, the co-founder of the Communitarian movement, was quoted as advocating the use of dunce caps to shame social miscreants. I see those girls now, bellies pressed tight against their skimpy miniskirts, hair luxuriantly spilling out beneath the plain white paper cones . . .

Q: Only females get the shame treatment?

A: Perhaps room could be made for single fathers on those new chain gangs.

Q: Great. Half the country will be picking up trash on the highway, and the other half will be vacuuming Wendy Gramm's living room.

A: I suppose we might let them forgo the dunce caps while they were actually wearing the leg irons.

Q: So that's the future? Everyone's poorer and under punitive supervision?

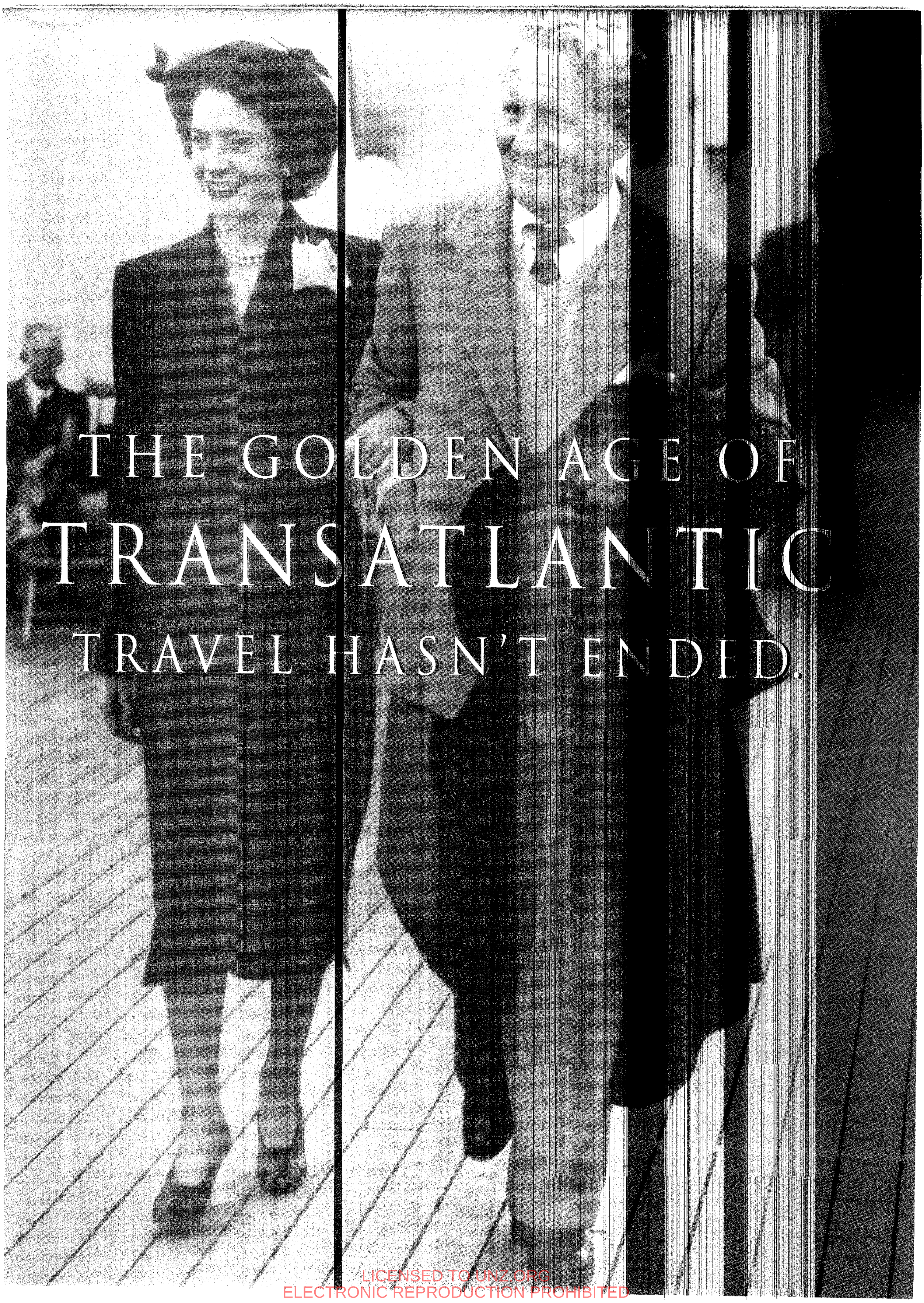
A: Not everyone. Only those whose improvidence leaves them unable to produce the high-quality goods and services we need to compete in the global marketplace.

Q. Such as?

A: Policy analyses, studies, articles, reviews, white papers, backgrounders, op-eds, research, tables, graphs, pie charts, extracts, abstracts, briefings, roundtables. Those able to turn out arguments like the ones I've mentioned will have no trouble finding stable employment with universities, institutes, think tanks, congressional offices. An energetic Ph.D. with the proper outlook can easily clear a hundred thousand a year, plus guaranteed appearances as an expert on "Nightline."

Q: That's a lot of money. I had no idea.

A: That's what I keep trying to tell you: Values matter most! ♦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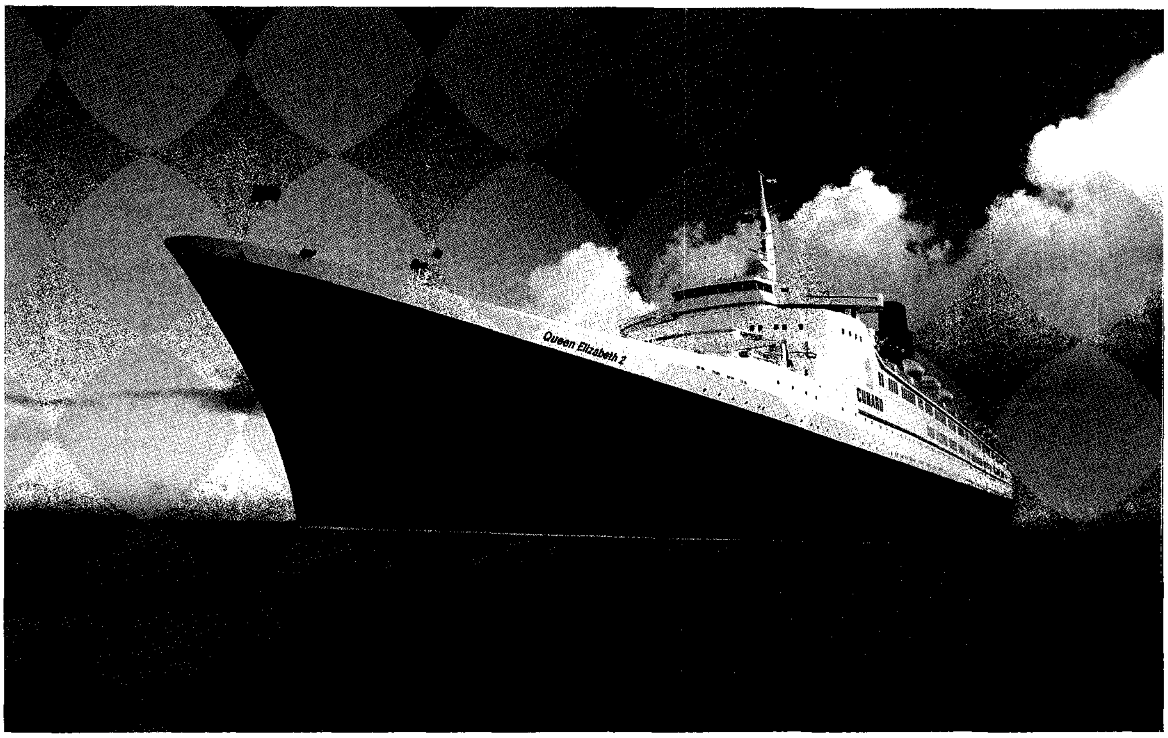

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DOMESTIC LIFE

MOM OVERBOARD!

What do power women who decide to quit the fast track do with themselves all day?

BY MARK SINGER

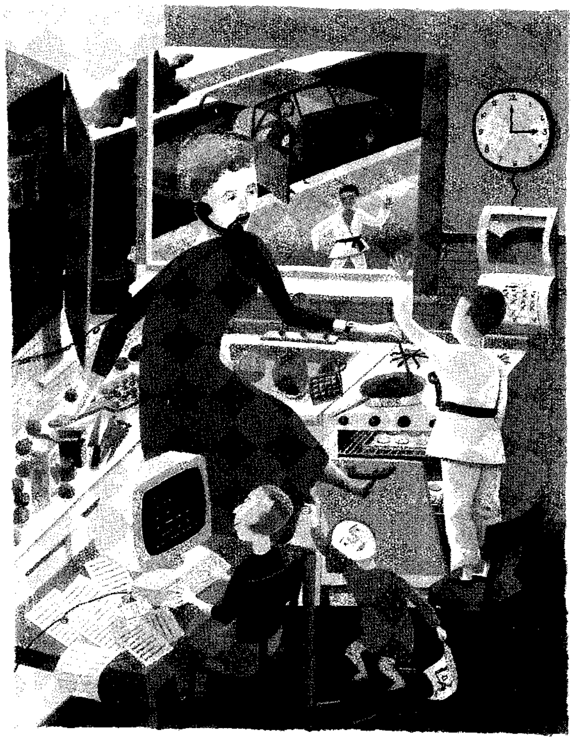
WHAT they had in mind was not complicated. Falling in love had been a snap, an act of faith in gravity. Other basic laws of nature, surely, would apply along the way. Details would resolve themselves. They would live in the city or a suburb, wherever they pleased. They would make room for two children, maybe three—unblemished surfaces upon which they would imprint their best selves. Somebody, a "nurturing" woman with no threatening presumptions, would look after the kids each day while Mom and Dad worked at their important jobs. Nights and weekends, Mom and Dad would divide the labor fifty-fifty. Dad would be a New Man, and Mom would be a Fulfilled Woman.

What they hadn't specifically foreseen: that the baby would start calling the sitter Mama; that the pipe would burst, the roof would leak, the train would stall; that the dry cleaner could never get out the spit-up stains; that indelible bags would materialize under the eyes; that the stay-at-home moms would invoke the No Nannies rule for play dates; that the Entenmann's cake sent to school for the bake sale would become an object of brutal gossip; that the forty-five-minute session locked inside the conference room with the breast pump would end with everything spilled all over the final draft of the Armbruster agreement; that Dad's secret motto would become "Thank God it's Monday."

Above all, they hadn't precisely anticipated that maternal instinct was a dull double-edged knife, and that Mom would tire of having it lodged between her ribs. One evening, while talking on the portable phone with that weasel Peterson in Denver, she put the boys in the tub. The synchronicity—explaining to Peterson that his proposal implied multiple felonious breaches of securities law and hearing Nathaniel announce, not actually in time, that he needed to go potty—seemed, in retrospect, a gift from the cosmos. As she angled for the floater with her free hand and fantasized about FedExing it to Peterson, the fog magically lifted. She could quit. She would quit. She would be free at last. She would downsize, lateralize—call it anything you liked. She didn't care. Finally, she would call all the shots, run her own outfit, answer to no one she didn't feel like answering to.

•

WHEN Sera quit, in 1990, at the age of thirty-three, she already had in place a highly evolved child-development-oversight system. Her training as an architect had given her the discipline to do "visual mapping inside my head." She could see a path to her children's future and engrave it in her brain. After her first baby, also named Sera, was born, in the spring of 1984, her maternity leave lasted three weeks. Sera and her husband, Tom, a publishing executive, then lived—and still do—a half hour from the city (in a town where I also happen to live). Each morning, she was on a train by seven-thirty, and on a good day she caught the five-thirty-nine or the six-oh-one coming home. While she was gone, the live-in Haitian nanny's job was to remember to follow instructions and fill in the blanks. A new day meant a fresh eight-and-a-half-by-eleven sheet, with an hour-by-hour timeline on the vertical axis and, across the horizontal, five categories: "Intake," "Sleep," "Alert," "B. Movmt.," "Special Note."



KATHY OSBORN

Little Sera was fifteen months old when her brother William arrived. Sera redesigned the gridwork so the nanny could track both babies on a single page. Several minutes a day, as ordered, the nanny directed each child's attention to the prints of Matisse paper cutouts that hung on the walls outside their bedrooms. "I wanted them to study the hard edges of the cutouts, so they would focus their eyes," Sera told me. Unless the children were sleeping, she wanted classical music wafting though the house. The regimen would change as the children grew older, when she would devise more elaborate charts and daily-activity requirements. For a toddler, the nanny followed a printed menu of activities that Sera had prescribed to stimulate visual, motor, and auditory progress: finger painting, crayoning, stencils, Colorforms, Legos, Bristle Blocks, puzzles, tools, Mr. Potato Head, alphabet tapes, farm toys that made animal sounds. Television was out of the question. ("TV is just like sex. The more you have it, the more you want it. And you don't need it. There are better things to do.")

To monitor the children's diets, Sera itemized suitable foods from five groups. In her absence, the nanny was expected to record what they ate, using a customized shorthand. Spaghetti with meat sauce was "V-4, P-1, C-4" (tomatoes, vegetable group; ground beef, protein group; noodles, carbohydrate group). A yummy helping of spinach, kosher steer liver, and rice was "V-4, P-5, C-2," and so on. Dessert was maybe a little F-4 (watermelon, fruit group) but not too much D-4 (dairy group, asterisked note: "Ice cream no more than once a week").

Again, after William was born, Sera's maternity leave lasted less than a month. Her boss congratulated her: "Now you've got two kids. You've got a daughter, you've got a son. You're all done. Great.

ONE ORDINARY EVENING

Lying entwined with you
on the long sofa

the hi-fi helping
Isolde to her climax

I was clipping
the coarse hairs

from your ears
and ruby nostrils

when you said, "Music
for cutting nose wires"

and we shook so
the nail scissors nicked

your gentle neck
blood your blood

I cleansed the place
with my tongue

and we clung tight
pelted with Teutonic cries

till the player
lifted its little prick

from the groove
all arias over

leaving us
in post-Wagnerian sadness

later that year
you were dead

by your own hand
blood your blood

I have never understood
I will never understand.

—Virginia Hamilton Adair

Welcome back to work." This was during a boom cycle in commercial construction. The architectural firm that employed her had been around for almost ninety years, and she was the first woman ever to be designated a project manager: to oversee from A to Z, from schematic designs to final drawings, the planning of a major piece of work—in this case, a twenty-two-story office building on Fifth Avenue. ("Mom, didn't you build a building in New York City?" "Yeah, I built more than one." "Wow, that's incredibly cool.")

In the late summer of 1988, she delivered what is called a bid set. ("The instructions for how to build the building, complete documents, every single nail, screw, you name it.") To finish this project on schedule, she worked several consecutive weekends, bringing little Sera, who was four, with her. Little Sera drew tiny pictures on Post-it notes and distributed them throughout the office, or she sat under a drafting table and played with her Barbies. Big Sera's recollection of this passage in her life included a vivid memory of feeling sick. She was pregnant again. The choice to have a third child, she later grasped, was a subconscious acknowledgment that "something had to give"—and, indeed, her entire body conveyed this message emphatically; she was confined to bed during much of the pregnancy. A second daughter, Meta, was born in the spring of 1989, at which point Sera's extended pregnancy leave became a permanent maternity leave. Late in 1990, she gave birth to her fourth, and final, child, a boy named Thaddeus.

CATHY: *When she got a call asking her to organize the Girl Scout cookie sale, she said yes, both because of and despite certain aesthetic objections. Handling this administrative task was preferable to, say, camping in the woods with a bunch of little girls. The cookies, however, were inedible. Her daughter once left a couple of undelivered boxes of cookies in the pantry, where they might have remained forever if the dog hadn't got to them.*

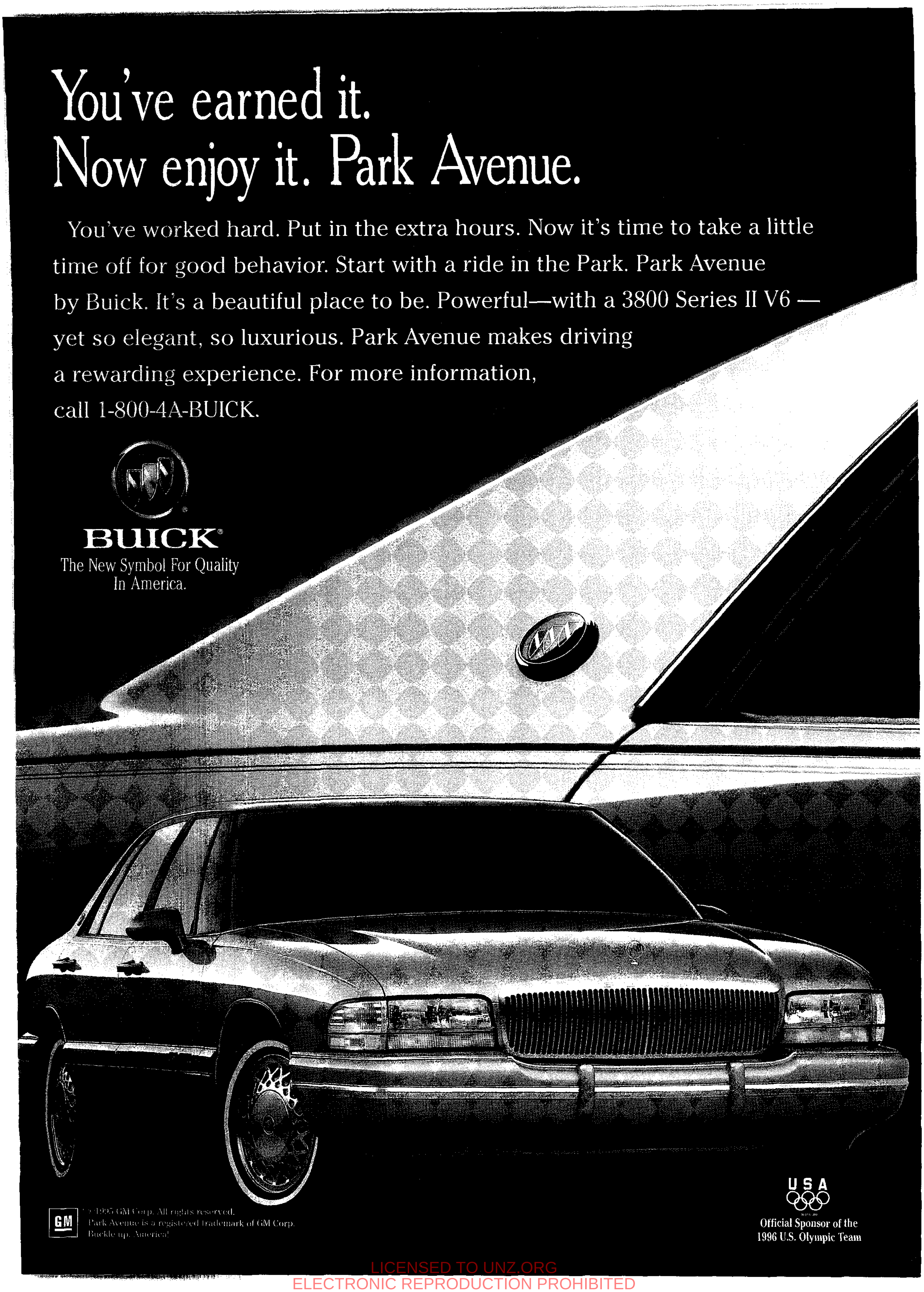
Oven-fresh homemade cookies, on the other hand, had intrinsic value. She enjoyed baking with her children during Christmas vacations and delivering plates of cookies to the neighbors. This friendly gesture demonstrated that she was no mere erstwhile luminary of the banking-law department but also a mom who had what it took to mobilize an army of gingerbread soldiers.

In time, she began to bake with a vengeance—cakes for birthdays, but mainly cookies. The cookie jar was always full, and her children were perpetually grateful. The approach of Christmas each year meant raising the ante. She started weeks ahead of time with rum balls, which improved with age, and shortbreads and nut-butter balls that would last. She made decorated cutouts and shaped other cookies into wreaths and candy canes. She made maple-pecan cookies and spiralled chocolate-and-vanilla freezer cookies, peanut-butter cookies and cranberry-orange cookies—five dozen per batch, fifty dozen by the time she was done.

Her triumph was the annual cookie exchange, the holiday party to which a hundred or so women brought generous samples of their wares, drank wine, complimented each other on their craftsmanship, and then took home a box of whatever looked appealing. Unfortunately, the cookie exchange developed a competitive undercurrent, and some women panicked. What they brought to the party was conspicuously bakery-bought; the tipoff was a cookie that looked too perfect. Her cookies looked real—because they were—and everybody loved them. To be polite, she gathered an assortment of other people's cookies and brought them home. When she set them on the kitchen counter, her children said, "Why didn't you just bring home the ones you took with you?" There was no chance they would deign to feast on these. Which was where, once again, the dog came in handy.

THE nebulous concept of "free time" presented itself to Sera. Years earlier, before children, she had belonged to the Junior League, but she had allowed her membership to lapse after discovering that "you don't know some people until you get on a committee and they start ordering you around." Now she decided to join the executive board of the local arts center, where she had once curated an exhibit on suburban-community development. A campaign to relocate and expand the town library was under way, and she was eager to donate her expertise. "I pass by that corner three times every day of my life," she said, referring to the new site. "I'd hate to have to look at an ugly piece of architecture."

Her child-care arrangements fluctuated (the Haitian nanny had gone off to have a baby of her own), but Sera didn't mind. She felt like making up for lost time. She continued to draw up lists because keeping pace with her instincts and impulses required plotting and budgeting. "I'm a designer," she said. "You have to design your children's future to a certain point. You have to create the environment for them to flourish. Sometimes I wake up at night and have an anxiety attack—that



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I've forgotten about this or that part of my child's brain."

There was a daily list of rudiments ("Sera & William: 7:00-7:15 A.M.—Wake up, Shower—body lotion & powder—check finger & toe nails, Brush Teeth, Dressed . . . 7:45-8:30 A.M.—Breakfast (vitamins), Pack snack & lunch . . . Meta & Thad: 4:00-4:30 P.M.—Bath, Bath oil/lotion, Medicine for Thad, Check nails, Pajamas . . . 7:30-8:30 P.M.—Bed time, Reading, Prayers") and there were also individualized charts that combined daily, biweekly, and weekly routines. When William was in second grade, for instance, his checklist consisted of thirteen items. Every day, he was expected to do his homework, practice the piano, practice the drums, make his bed, read aloud for thirty minutes, and tidy his room. Twice a week, he would work on a book report, read to his younger siblings, set the table, empty the dishwasher, play educational games. At least one day a week, he was either supposed to hone his computer skills or study Korean. The final item on his checklist was: "13. Observe stars."

CAROL: *Even after you quit work, she knew, you carried your demons with you. When she no longer practiced law, what she missed—even more than knowing that her time was being billed at around two hundred and fifty dollars an hour—was the gamesmanship, the rituals of Type A personalities meticulously sharpening their knives. She had a habit of reading the preliminary school budget or the proposal for the new school-governance mandate the same way she used to vet a securities prospectus. Her self-anointed role, as she defined it, was that of fiduciary for every child in the school district. She would attend public hearings and, with insistent politeness, raise points and ask questions until she wore out her welcome.*

There was a tenured second-grade teacher at her children's school who, it seemed, had to go. The teacher intimidated children, belittled them, convinced them that they would never learn. Quietly, she helped organize a petition drive, soliciting the signatures of parents of first graders who didn't want their children assigned to this teacher's classroom. One day, after learning about a fresh insult that the teacher had inflicted upon her daughter, she lost it. She called the superintendent directly, and after that she called the principal and told him what she had done. Twenty minutes later, she got a phone call from the teacher, whose attempt at contrition did not get far. "Listen, I'm from the South," she told the teacher. "My people have a long-standing tradition of horsewhipping people like you to run them out of town. Or else they'd shoot you. You should be grateful you're living in this century."

Six weeks later, the teacher was gone from the classroom.

SERA reflected upon her own childhood experiences: born in Korea; emigrated at twelve, after her mother married an American; adopted by her stepfather; schools in New Jersey and Virginia. She was an only child and a conspicuous achiever. She had become skeptical of the child-rearing philosophy her mother subscribed to, which stressed performance—recite this, show that, demonstrate your knowledge—too often at the expense of self-esteem. Her own children, she decided, would develop a wide range of skills (art, music, nature study, team sports), but the emphasis would be upon enhancing social development rather than proving individual superiority. With four children spread over six years, she needed a master plan with an overriding theme and focus. This she defined as "raising each child as an only child and a middle child."

"Bring me the head of John the Baptist. Just kidding. Get me the Paulson file."

The summer when little Sera was four and William was almost three, they started taking swimming lessons and tennis lessons. For the next several years, they competed on the country-club swimming and tennis teams and brought home trophies. (The progress of William's golf game was a casualty of a decision that Sera's husband made a year ago: to de-activate their country-club membership. Sera regretted this, because "golf is something you can't start too early.") Little Sera enrolled in dancing school at three and began to specialize in jazz and tap at four. Around the same time, she started taking a eurhythmics class, which integrated music and full body movement, and William started a year later. From nursery school through first grade she attended gymnastics classes, and so did William. Both children were enrolled in drawing and ceramics classes at the arts center, but, because of scheduling conflicts, they dropped out when little Sera started second grade. To compensate, big Sera made private arrangements with an instructor from the arts center, who agreed to come to the house every couple of months to do projects with the children in an "art room" that had been carved out of the basement play area. Little Sera was five and William was four when they learned to play chess—an enthusiasm that seemed to flag after a couple of years. When William resumed playing, in second grade, Sera hired a private chess tutor, and he started winning tournaments.

After two seasons of Little League tee-ball and baseball, little Sera retired. This coming Little League season might or might not be William's swan song as well. Little Sera also gave up basketball after fifth grade, which in hindsight could have caused her parents to question the wis-

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dom of their investment in her sleep-away basketball camp. The two summers she spent at sailing camp, on the other hand, were a can't-lose proposition. "You know how you can eat a banana and it gives you so much of what you need?" big Sera said. "That's also true with sailing. It's multidisciplinary—math, physical exercise, nature." The sport that little Sera has stuck with longest is soccer; she has played on a girls' travelling team for four years, and for three summers she attended one-week sessions at soccer camp. This coming summer, she'll be attending soccer camp after she returns from a month in Europe at an international children's camp. After that, she'll head to Virginia for a week with her mother's parents; big Sera wants her to use that time working on her Korean and learning to sew. At one point, big Sera was looking for a charm school for little Sera. Instead, she persuaded a friend who was a former model to come around for a few private sessions—one on clothes, one on poise, one on skin care. The former model also gave little Sera a copy of "Tiffany's Table Manners for Teenagers."

As a child, big Sera was given daily private piano and violin lessons. One of her goals is to play trios with little Sera and William. Piano lessons for little Sera began in first grade. Until recently, the piano was in the kitchen, which enabled big Sera simultaneously to cook and observe little Sera as she practiced or worked with her teacher. "You have to be there with them to show your interest," she told me. "You have to make it pleasant." Little Sera took up the recorder, clarinet, and flute in the third grade, and by sixth grade she and the other members of her flute club had performed during a party at the White House. William, by third grade, had stopped playing the piano and the drums. When Sera persuaded him to concentrate next on the clarinet, her husband warned, "William's not going to be in the marching band. He's going to be on the playing field, in the game."

The skating lessons that William began when he was three led to hockey at six. He now plays in a travelling hockey league that specializes in ice time at exotic hours in inconvenient locales—say, Sunday morning, six o'clock, at West Point. Every Tuesday, William takes supplemental power-skating lessons. Next summer, he will attend two weeks of hockey camp in New Hampshire, a week of puck-handling camp on Long Island, and a couple of weeks of defensemen's camp in Connecticut. Sera hopes that William, like little Sera, will stick with the travelling soccer team he's played on for the past two years. He has been one of the leading scorers, a fact that is possibly attributable to the one-on-one private soccer coaching Sera arranged for him. One of my sons plays on the same team. Often, I find, the pleasure and natural excitement of the game are enhanced by the suspense of wondering when the referee is going to warn our coach that if that mother on the sideline doesn't stop hollering he's going to award the opposition a penalty kick.

CAROL: *Fundamentally, she was happy. She was conditioned to believe she could accomplish whatever she wanted or adopt any persona she pleased, and after she stopped practicing law no one could pin an easy label on her. Once, a friend said, "If you'd told me ten years ago that I would become a housewife, I never would have believed you," and she replied, "Who says you're a housewife? I'm not!" She wasn't a floor scrubber, a pillow puffer, or any version of Martha Stewart wannabe. She was proud that her daughters had witnessed the hollowness of her husband's threat that, if the house wasn't cleaned up, this year there wouldn't be a Christmas tree. "Guess what," she would remind the girls. "We got a tree anyway, didn't we?"*

Her own mother, who also disdained domesticity, used to pick her up after school every day and they would do stuff—cruise the countryside, pick corn, go fishing, visit a divertingly ditsy alcoholic aunt. Mainly, they drove. She enjoyed doing the same thing with her daughters, though with a bit more focus. Her favorite weekday afternoon was Wednesday, when she would climb behind the wheel of her Taurus wagon and emulate Cha Cha Muldowney.

The girls should learn to ride horses, she decided, so she arranged back-to-back half-hour lessons—with a particular teacher whose only available time slot was Wednesday from four o'clock to five. That her older daughter had a one-hour swim-team practice every Wednesday at four-thirty—as well as a Brownies meeting every other Wednesday at five-thirty—she regarded less as an inconvenience than as an amusing challenge. That Carol herself was also the Brownie troop leader provided a bonus hurdle.

The older girl wore her bathing suit under her riding clothes, and as soon as she got off the horse her mother bombed off to swim team—less than ten minutes in manageable traffic. She would double back in time to pick

PRADA

up the younger girl at the stables, then retrace her route in plenty of time for the end of swim practice. Every other week, she arranged for the older girl to catch a ride from swimming, because the drive home from the riding lesson usually left about forty-five seconds to spare before the Brownie troop members began to arrive. "Pay attention, I might be micro-managing your lives now and turning you into little axe murderers," she told her daughters. "But trust me, you'll be happy axe murderers."

SERA and Tom live in the same house Tom grew up in and their children attend the same public schools he did. Last fall, little Sera started middle school. At the end of the first marking period, when she brought home a report card with all A's, big Sera decided it was probably safe to take a break from her weekly hour and a half of private tutoring in math and English. The identity of the tutor, who has been on retainer since little Sera was in second grade, is proprietary information. "I don't want to say who it is," Sera told me. "But I have a very good source." The tutor continues to meet every week with William—working on math, English, and study skills—and Sera is thinking of finding someone else to teach him Spanish.

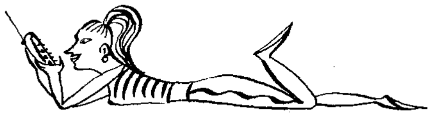
Meta is now in first grade and soon, Sera thinks, she wants her to start working with the math-and-English tutor. Because Thad is still in nursery school, he's not quite ready. Sera knew Thad would be a good skater when, soon after he learned to walk, he started motoring around the house in William's Rollerblades, so she bought him a pair of his own. Both Meta and Thad participated in the same hockey clinic this winter. This spring will be Meta's second season of tee-ball. A few months ago, she started piano lessons, and Sera says that Spanish and Korean are "in the wings." Thad will probably begin recorder lessons this summer. William has been teaching him and Meta chess.

All four children attend catechism classes one morning a week. "And they read the Bible," Sera told me. "You know, for each age there's a different edition of the Bible they can read. But I'm not sure how much I like it, because it's very violent." The afterlife that Sera envisions for herself runs counter to Catholic dogma. What she looks forward to is really more a form of reincarnation. "In my next life, I'd like to be born a man," she told me. "I wouldn't have any emotional attachment to anybody. I'd just have fun making money. And have a wife who takes care of everything."

CATHY: *Always, she played by the rules. In school, she never once turned in an assignment late, and in business she operated the same way. Her firstborn, a daughter, was five months old and not yet weaned when she returned to work because an important deal suddenly had to close. It didn't help that the closing was scheduled for immediately after Father's Day weekend and that her husband also had to work. She had no choice but to bring the baby with her. She ended up in a room with ten men who spent their Father's Day taking turns holding her daughter while she redrafted and shuffled the closing papers. Every couple of hours, she excused herself to nurse. It was a revelation: this was not how she intended to spend her time with her children.*

After more than a year on the mommy track—which at her firm meant being at her desk every morning by seven o'clock to earn the right to leave at five-thirty, for three-quarters pay—she threw in the towel. But her sleeping habits never changed. By 5:30 A.M.*, she was alert, except in summer, when the sunrise woke her up even earlier. She did the laundry, emptied the dishwasher, made lunches and snacks, straightened the house, got the kids dressed and fed and off, and as soon as they were out the door she had a block of time that she was willing to give away.*

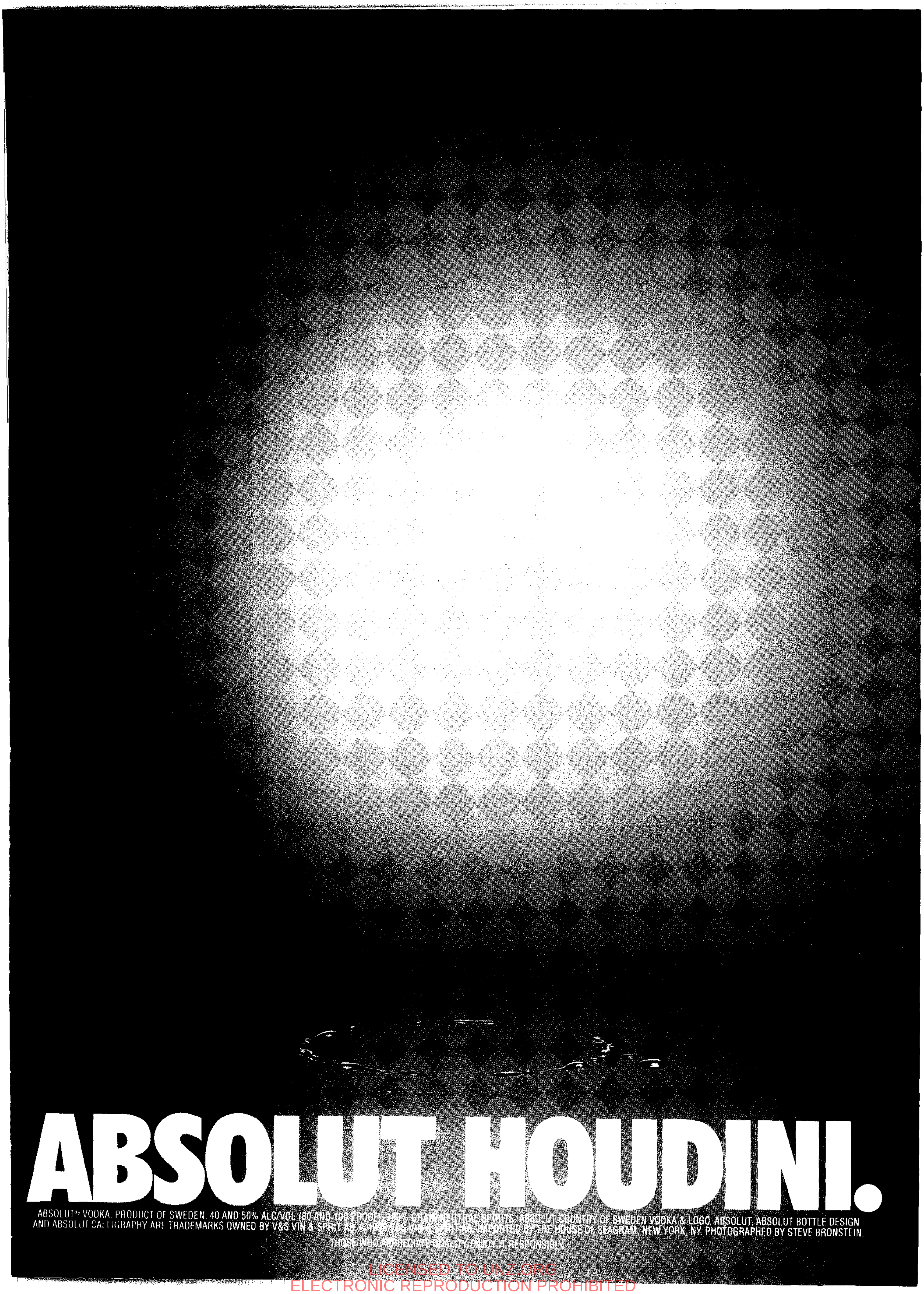
To anyone who asked, it soon became evident that she could coördinate any local project and deliver on schedule. She joined the arts-center board, became a library trustee and recruited other library volunteers, served on the committee to screen school-board candidates, agreed to be president of both the Junior League and the PTA, typed the whole school directory and the whole annual literary magazine, and didn't object when her husband volunteered them as co-commissioners of the soccer league, even though she correctly suspected it would become the family albatross. Beginning in spring, it fell upon her to process six hundred registration forms, deposit every check, account for every expenditure, assemble teams, draft coaches and assistants and team mothers and publicity managers, plot the availability of playing fields. In late summer, it actually got worse—fifty-hour weeks sorting T-shirts, printing and mailing rosters and schedules, packing balls and whistles and cones and goalie vests and goalie gloves and first-aid kits in equipment bags. She had the kids gathered around the dining-room table stuffing envelopes as they whined, "We want to go to the pool!" She accused herself of child neglect. She tried denying what the situation reminded her of, but, of course, she knew too well: this was exactly how she felt right before she realized that she would have to quit her job.



FRIENDS of Sera's gave a New Year's Eve party and invited a Tarot card reader, a palm reader, and an astrologer. The palm reader told Sera that she had a tendency to get into traps, and she didn't enjoy hearing that, because it implied that motherhood was a trap. The good news came when she gave the astrologer the dates and hours of her children's births and was informed that many of the signs were auspicious. "Thad has, like, eight planets that are cardinal signs in the tenth house, which means he can't help being famous," she said. "When he's twenty—it will be just the tip of the iceberg—he's going to be incredible. And Meta's child is going to be famous. So it'll be my child and my grandchild. It's on the map."

As if she didn't know what to make of her own fatalism, she went on, "The secret of this whole thing is there is no secret. Whether a mother works or doesn't work probably makes no difference. I believe in supernatural power—inherent things that you have no control over. What I find hard in my life right now is being in a vacuum. I'm no longer in school, where I get a report card, or at work, where I would get a salary review. We don't get grades, we don't get paid, we don't know until we die—actually, we don't know until *they* die. There are no guarantees. This is the way I approach any project. I have children and I have to make sure that I do the best that I possibly can. How do I define 'best'? When you go to bed totally exhausted and saying, 'I couldn't have done one more thing for them today.' "

One morning when it was snowing and sleeting and Sera's kids were home—along with the plumbers, who were there because the main sewer line had backed up—I went over to her house to hang out. When I arrived, I found her in the living room, where there was a checkerboard-top table, a Calder lithograph above the family photographs on the mantel, a large



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THOSE WHO APPRECIATE QUALITY ENJOY IT RESPONSIBLY.

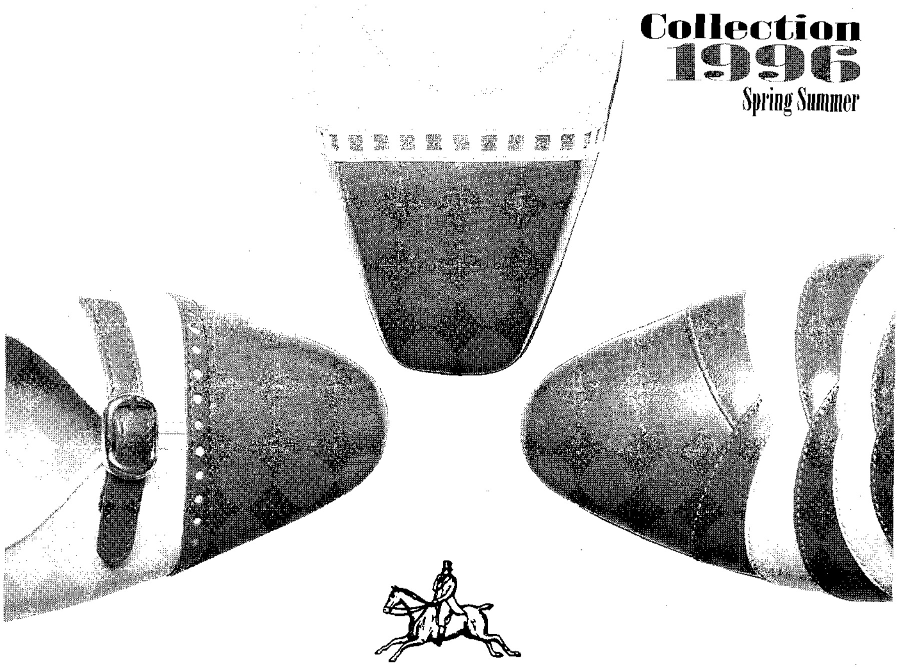
fluorescent geometric painting brightening an adjacent wall, and, near a row of windows, two glass vases of dried flowers standing on a large round table that was draped with a floral-print cloth. Southeastern light streamed in, and, despite the weather, everything inside felt clear and cozy. A stereo piped a Handel flute sonata from the next room. Sera was curled up on an off-white sectional sofa with Meta, who first read aloud from a storybook and then recited sight words ("meadows," "famous," "cough," "terrible," "hungrier," "cellar," "calendar") from index cards that Sera was holding. It was a deceptively serene moment.

Though the phrase "snow day" strikes terror in a lot of parents, Sera regarded this as an opportunity. She had a long list of tasks to accomplish: all kids finish writing Christmas thank-you notes; have William assemble table grandfather sent for Christmas; bake birthday cake for Tom; shop for Tom's gift; work on summer-camp applications; organize den; go to bank; get rid of Christmas candy; return Christmas gifts; buy William personal organizer; buy colored index cards for Meta's sight words; make about twenty phone calls (including clarinet teacher, insurance company, masonry contractor, soccer telephone tree).

When the sight-word exercise was done, Sera announced, "Meta, it's time to write your letters." She set a box of purple floral stationery on the checkerboard table, handed Meta a pen, and said, "O.K., Meta, now let's make a list. Who do you have to write to? Grandpa—Dad's father—gave you what? A hundred dollars. And Grandma—Dad's mom—gave you the black pants and the Gap clothes that you like. And Grandma and Grandpa, my parents, gave you the handmade wooden chest. All right, Uncle Thaddeus and Michael gave you a bracelet and that tape and book—how do you say that—'Jumanji'? You can just write it out the way it sounds. Who else? Patty? Patty gave you wonderful things. The candy and the colors and the book. And the Conroys gave you—O.K., the chocolate. And Uncle George gave you a Gap check—money you can spend. Now, who did we forget? What about Mommy and Daddy?"

"Daddy gave me the T-shirt and Mommy gave me . . ." Meta paused, momentarily stumped.

"*Meta*," Sera told her. "Mommy gave you everything." ◆



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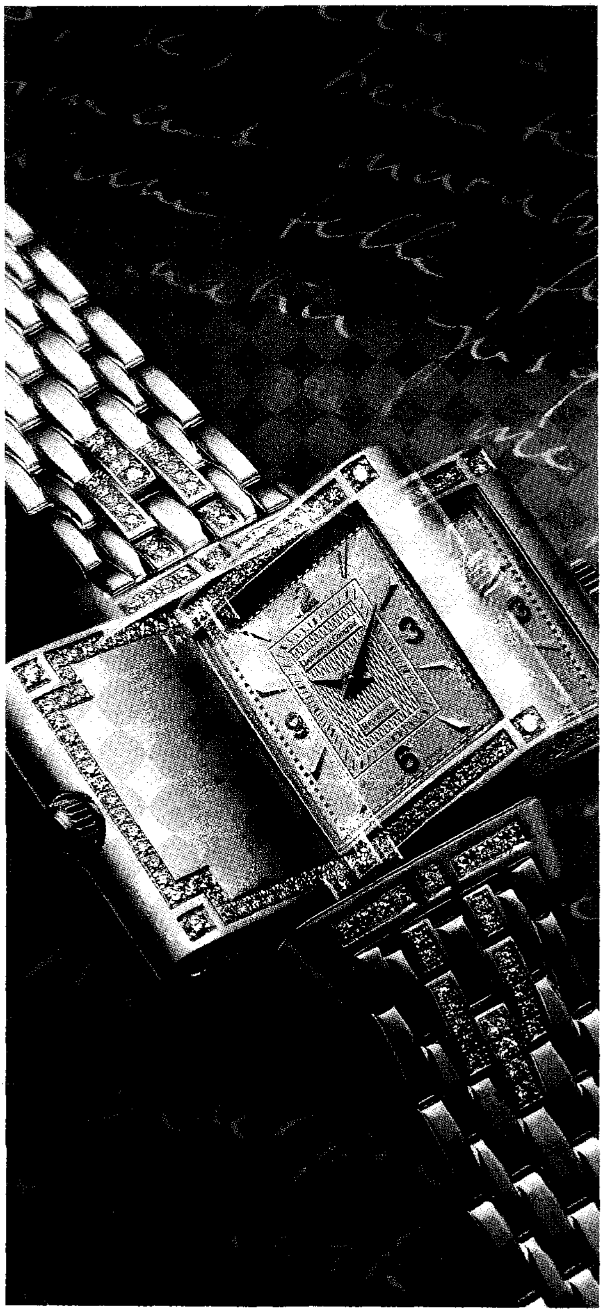

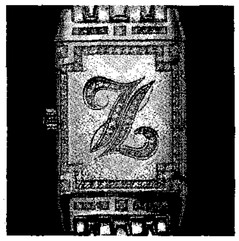

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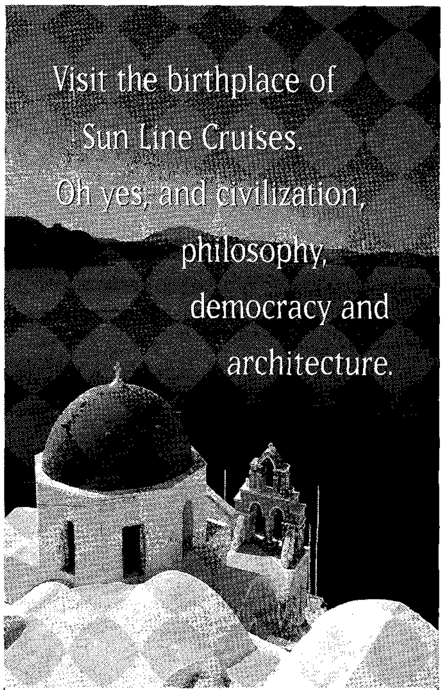

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PERSONAL HISTORY

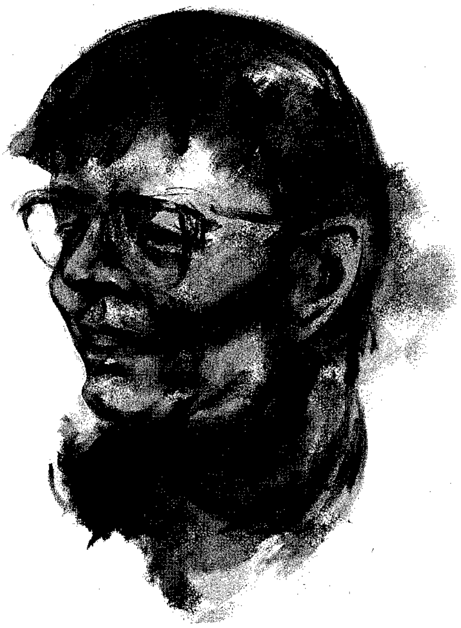
SIN BIG

The author created her own feminist lexicon and became a gleeful flamethrower in the world of academic theology.

BY MARY DALY

EVER since childhood, I have been honing my skills for living the life of a Radical Feminist Pirate and cultivating the Courage to Sin. The word "sin" is derived from the Indo-European root "es-," meaning "to be." When I discovered this etymology, I intuitively understood that for a woman trapped in patriarchy, which is the religion of the entire planet, "to be" in the fullest sense is "to sin."

Women who are Pirates in a phallocratic society are involved in a complex operation. First, it is necessary to Plunder—that is, righteously rip off—gems of knowledge that the patriarchs have stolen from us. Second, we must Smuggle back to other women our Plundered treasures. In order to invent strategies that will be big and bold enough for the next millennium, it is crucial that women share our experiences: the chances we have taken and the choices that have kept us alive. They are my Pirate's battle cry and wake-up call for women who want to hear.



Mary Daly: "Favorite chants included 'Witch trial—jesuit style.' "

KEN KRAWCZYK

Piratic Preparations in Childhood

ONE day when I was about nine or ten, I was walking home from St. John the Evangelist parochial school in Schenectady, New York, accompanied by an obnoxious boy in my class who was gloating over the fact that he was an altar boy, while I could never "serve Mass," because I was only a girl. Although I had no interest in becoming an altar girl, this repulsive revelation of the sexual caste system that I would later learn to call "patriarchy" burned its way into my brain and kindled an unquenchable Rage. Since I soon found that I could not communicate this knowledge to those around me, I felt alone with it.

One day, a saleswoman came to our house taking orders for children's books. Her list included a book about ships, but when my mother tried to order it for me the woman embarrassed her by saying that it would be *silly* to order such a book for a little *girl.* This only increased my desire to find out about ships—especially pirate ships—and most especially the kind that could sail far up among the stars. In my mind, I began sprinting around Intergalactically, seeking my own homeland, which would be very different from this world of stupid restrictions. If that Otherworld did not exist, I would somehow conjure it up.

My father was a travelling salesman who sold ice-cream freezers. Our income was dependent upon his commissions, so I learned about living on the edge at a very early age.

My mother encouraged me unfailingly. She told me that she had loved school but had been "yanked out" of high school during her sophomore year. She wanted to give me everything that she had not been given in her own childhood. On those rare occasions when I volunteered to help with the household chores, she almost invariably said, "Go do your

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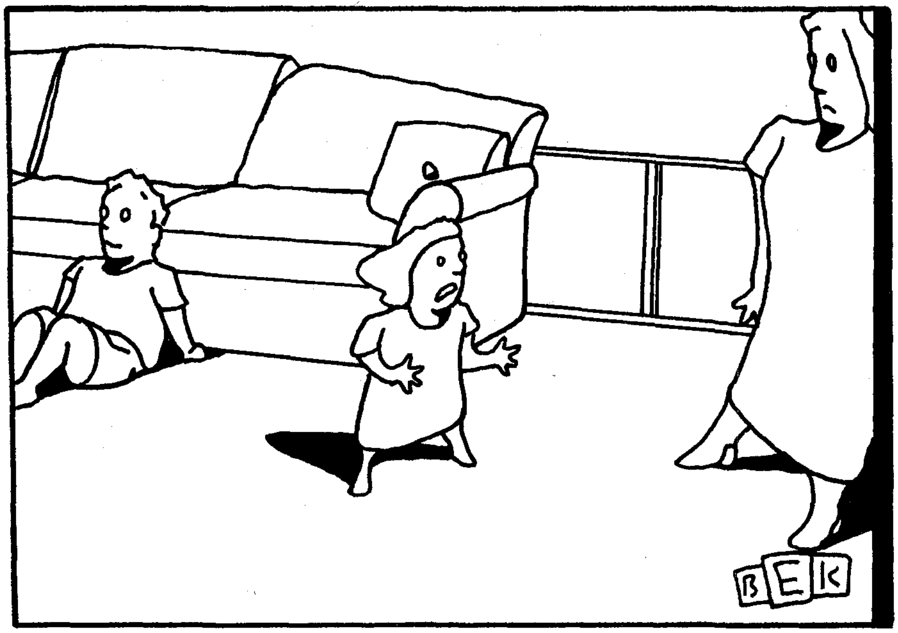

"Why does he always get to be the boy?"

• •

own work, dear!" So I had to find out what that work might be and try to do it.

When I was very small, I realized that I wanted to be a writer. This desire was inspired at least in part by a special box of books which I had seen around our house. The box contained copies of a book that had been written and published by my father long before I was born. The title of this volume, published in 1914, was "What Every Ice Cream Dealer Should Know."

My father had been forced to leave school after the eighth grade. I was deeply impressed that he had produced these red-covered books. I felt as if they were flashing a signal to me: "Do this! Carry on your heritage. Write!" But that left the question, "Write about *what*?"

In high school, I noticed the intellectual shortcomings of most of the boys in my classes, particularly in the areas of syntax and math. Because they were so obtuse, the teachers were obliged to move slowly when I felt ready to fly. I was becoming equipped to see through all the myths of male intellectual superiority.

There were also vital messages from nature. Especially important was a startling communication from a clover blossom one summer day when I was about fourteen. It said, with utmost simplicity, "I am." It was an experience that I would later call "an intuition of Be-ing, the Verb in which we all participate." Such invitations to my adolescent spirit were somehow intimately connected with the call of books. It was this encounter that launched me on my quest to become a Radical Feminist philosopher.

Onward by Degrees: Perfecting My Craft

After I graduated from college, my lust for learning and adventure led me to graduate school. First, I went to the Catholic University of America, in Washington, D.C., which had offered me a full-tuition scholarship while I studied for an M.A. in English. One night, after tedious hours of translating Middle English, I fell into a deep sleep and dreamed of green: Elemental, Be-dazzling Green. When I woke up, I had a revelation: "Study philosophy!" However, there was no scholarship money available there for a woman to study philosophy.

One day, when I was sitting in class, I suddenly had a vision of myself standing at a blackboard teaching *theology*. This was mystifying, since I had no ambition to pursue that subject. Moreover, such a thing was unheard of in 1952, when catholic women were still not allowed to teach or study theology.

Shortly after this unusual event, I "just happened" to see an ad for a School of Sacred Theology for women at St. Mary's College in Notre Dame, Indiana. I learned that this program had been initiated by the president of the college, Sister Madeleva. That fiery nun was exasperated that no university in this country would admit women to study catholic theology at the doctoral level. When I wrote to her, she immediately offered me a scholarship and a part-time teaching job to support my studies. Having armed myself with the M.A., I jumped at the chance. On the train headed for St. Mary's, I felt that I was riding a Great Wind.

At St. Mary's, I acquired the habit of thinking philosophically in a rigorously logical manner. Medieval theology, especially that of Aquinas, who became my teacher, was philosophy carried into an Other dimension. After earning my Ph.D. in religion at the ripe old age of twenty-five, I decided to keep on Searching. I applied to the University of Notre Dame, but I was refused admission to the doctoral program in philosophy solely on the basis of my sex. Moreover, I was unable to find a suitable teaching position, and found myself marooned for five years at a mediocre college in Brookline, Massachusetts. So, in 1959, I crossed the Atlantic to study at the University of Fribourg in Switzerland, where there was scholarship money available and where no obstacle was placed in the path of women who wanted to study for degrees in theology. My purpose was to obtain the highest of higher degrees in theology and philosophy, and between 1959 and 1965 I accumulated four degrees in Fribourg. I was getting ready to Sin Big.

The question may well arise: *Why did you go on and on pursuing doctorates—especially in theology?* Was I a learned lunatic? Well, sure. But what else could I do that would prepare me so adequately for my work in the women's movement that was soon to come?

Theology—especially medieval catholic theology—is a treasure chest containing archaic gems. By studying arduously, I equipped myself to reverse the reversals inherent in christian dogma and decode its doctrines with precision. Subsequently, I would take these myths, symbols, and "mysteries" out of their phallocentric framework and make them Visible in a woman-centered context. In my books "Beyond God the Father" (1973) and "Gyn/Ecology" (1978), the doctrines of the male-god and of the trinity are revealed as distorted reflections of ancient female images of divinity. So, also, the idea of the "virgin birth" of Jesus is ex-

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posed as both a pale derivative and a reversal of pre-patriarchal myths of parthenogenesis (which produces divine daughters, not sons).

During those years in Fribourg, I followed my own interior compass. In fact, I Plundered with a vengeance—flying to university classes on my Velosolex motor bicycle, teaching in three junior-year-abroad programs, and exploring Europe on a very skimpy shoestring. In 1964, I published an article in *Commonweal* magazine on women and the church, which led to a letter from a British publisher inviting me to write a book on the subject. My Smuggling career was about to begin, but I needed a great burst of inspiration, and within a few months that happened.

A TERRIBLE MOMENT OF REVELATION

IN the fall of 1965, I travelled to Rome for the Second Vatican Council of the Roman Catholic Church. One day, I borrowed a journalist's identification card and went into St. Peter's Basilica to sit in on a major session. In the distance, I saw a huge number of cardinals and bishops, old men in crimson dresses. In another section were the "auditors"—a group that included a few women, most of whom were nuns dressed in long black habits. The women sat docilely, listening to the senile, cracking whines of the men in red droning on in Latin, which the readers as well as the listeners barely comprehended. But what I found most appalling was the contrast between the arrogant bearing and colorful attire of the "princes of the church" and the humble, self-deprecating manner of the women. When the veiled nuns shuffled to the altar rail to receive "Holy Communion" from the hands of a priest, I felt that I was observing a string of lowly ants at a bizarre picnic. No Fellini movie could have outdone this unintended self-satire of catholicism.

I came to see that all of the so-called major religions—from buddhism and hinduism to islam, judaism, and christianity, as well as such secular derivatives as freudianism, jungianism, marxism, and maoism—are mere sects, infrastructures of the edifice of patriarchy. All are erected as parts of the male's shelter against anomie—that is, unpredictability and disorder. And the symbolic message is this: women are the dreaded anomie ("the enemy"). We are the real objects under attack in all the wars of patriarchy.

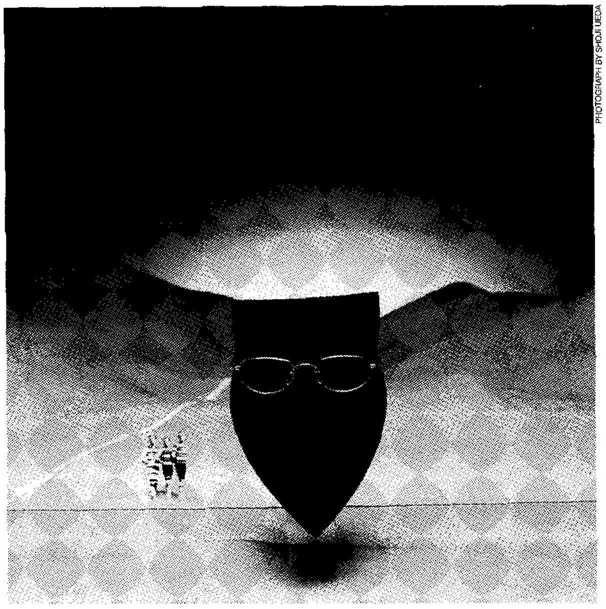
That moment of revelation in Rome continues to work subliminally, inspiring my humor and stoking the Fires of my Fury not merely against the catholic church and all the other religions and institutions that are the tentacles of patriarchy but against everything that dulls and diminishes women. Through me, it shouts messages meant for all women within Earshot: "Tell on them! Laugh out loud at their pompous penile processions! Reverse their reversals! Decode their 'mysteries'! Break their taboos! Spin tapestries of your own creation! Sin Big!"

BOOM, BOOM, BOOMERANG . . . BACK AND AHEAD TO BOSTON

IN 1966, after seven years of glorious freedom in Europe, I spiralled back to the United States, anticipating the old dullness of the nineteen-fifties. But America was no longer the dead zone that I had fled in 1959.

I began teaching in what was ostensibly the liberal theology department at jesuit-run Boston College, which, over the years, would serve as my laboratory for the study of patriarchal tricks and for the development of Radical Feminist strategies. My first book, "The Church and the Second Sex," my reasonable and relatively mild book exposing the misogynism of "the church," was published in this country in 1968. Shortly after the publication and attendant publicity—including major television appearances—I was given a one-year terminal contract by Boston College; that is, I was fired. Although the university "bore-ocrats" gave no reason for their action, the students and the media understood the obvious connection between the book and the firing. An estimated fifteen hundred students—nearly all male—demonstrated on campus, and twenty-five hundred signed a petition. The administration building was decorated with brilliant red graffiti (still faintly but clearly legible in 1996). Television cameras rolled. My case received national/international/supernatural publicity.

In June, 1969, the embarrassed administration finally backed down, and I was ungraciously granted promotion and tenure. I began to see beyond this one university and its petty politics to the universal disease of "academentia." Tearing off the mind bindings that were stran-



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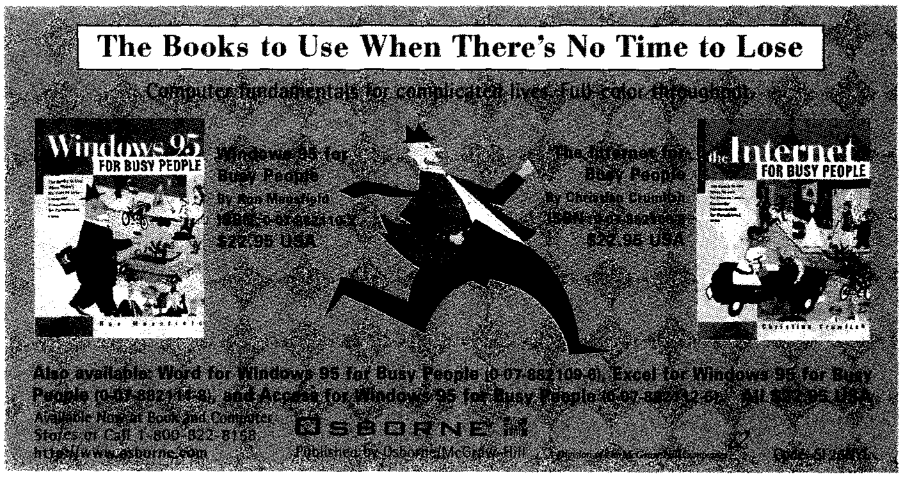

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gling me, I moved into an invisible counter-university—the Feminist Universe.

METAMORPHIC EVENTS AND STRATEGIES

IN 1971, I became the first woman to be invited to preach the Sunday service at Harvard's Memorial Church. Had the invitation been issued ten or even five years earlier, it might have appeared as an acceptable honor. By that time, however, I was acutely aware of the trap of tokenism. If I accepted, I would be used to legitimize that church in particular and christianity in general. If I refused, I would be forfeiting an important opportunity for communication. I decided to "accept," with the intention of giving an anti-sermon that would be a clarion call to all to abandon patriarchal religion. I met with a few friends, and together we planned what came to be known as the Harvard Memorial Exodus. In order to deliver the "sermon," which would be a springboard for a walkout, I was obliged to sit in the sanctuary during the first part of the service. Misogynist scriptural passages were read by two of my Cohorts, thus paving the way for my anti-sermon.

I mounted the steps to the gigantic, phalluslike pulpit, and as I spoke I fervently hoped that afterward I would not have to endure the humiliation of being alone, except for six or seven staunch comrades, as I stalked out of the church. But the moment I finished, hundreds of women and some of the men began stampeding out of the church. By the time I managed to run down the steps of the enormous pulpit, half of the "flock" were pushing ahead of me. I just joined the crowd.

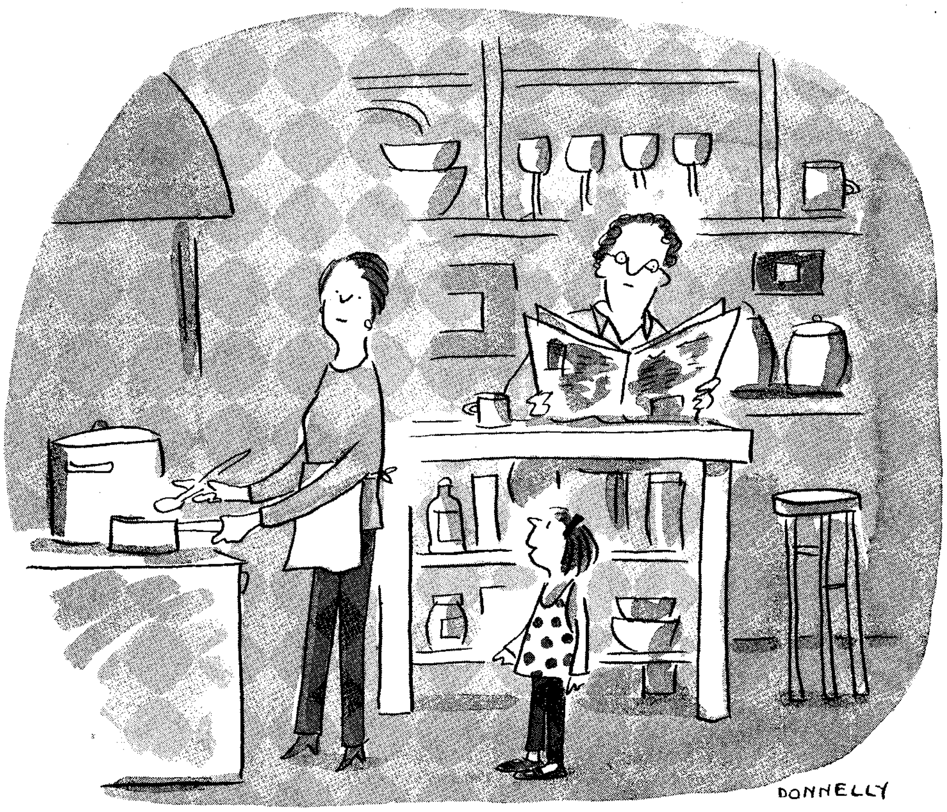
IN 1975, I was refused a long-overdue promotion to the rank of full professor at Boston College. My response was to create, along with my female students and allies, an event known as the Forum on Women in Higher Education. Eight hundred women packed the large gymnasium, and the moderator of the forum, Robin Morgan, greeted them with the battle cry "Sisters, we meet on bloody jesuit ground!" By 1975, the backlash against feminism in universities and throughout society was well under way. Many women faculty and students spoke of the harassment they had experienced at their "home" institutions.

After that, I took an unpaid leave of absence in order to write "Gyn/Ecology," a book that explores patriarchal myths and the enactment of these in the form of atrocities against women. When the book was published in 1978, university administrators predictably reacted with "misterical" behavior. Monitors were sent to "observe" my classes, and various other mechanisms of mental torture were employed. While that institution has benefited from my name, attracting students and visiting faculty and gaining recognition for academic excellence and "liberality"/"liberalism," it has consistently fostered another kind of "name and fame." The grapevine blacklisting within the intricate buddy system that is the academic men's club is intended to manufacture a "no-win" situation for me as well as for all Radical Feminists, actual and potential. From its inception, the decade of the nineteen-eighties was a time of creeping malaise in the United States. Gradually, many women became divided over every imaginable issue. Many could not see that the agents of androcracy were using their familiar strategy of "divide and conquer." Many women felt spooked. I did my best to convey optimism, and to name the agents of atrocities against women and nature through my teaching, public speaking, and writing. During this period, I published two books. The first, "Pure Lust: Elemental Feminist Philosophy" (1984), carries on where "Gyn/Ecology" leaves off. The other is "Websters' First New Intergalactic Wickedary of the English Language," a dictionary for Wicked women, which I conjured in cahoots with Jane Caputi in 1987.

In 1988-89, I decided to "blow the whistle" on B.C. by renewing my application for a promotion to full professor. My request was met with ridiculous rejection yet again. Colleagues from around the United States, Canada, and Europe sent outraged letters of protest. B.C. students and some of the faculty held five explosively original demonstrations on my behalf. For several months, loud chanting could be heard all across campus. Favorite chants included "Witch trial—jesuit style" and "Mary Daly refused again—academic freedom only for men." Another was "Barth [dean] and Monan [president], peas in a pod; keep women down in the name of God."

THE WITCHES RETURN: PATRIARCHY ON TRIAL

ON May 14, 1989, hundreds of women poured into Sanders Theatre at Harvard University for an event that was billed as "A Dramatic Indictment of Gynocide, 1989." The opening address was given by Evelyn Wight, who spoke movingly of the murder of her sister, Rebecca. This atrocity had been perpe-



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trated by a confirmed lesbian-hater while Rebecca was hiking on the Appalachian Trail with her partner, Claudia Brenner. At the conclusion of the speech, I pronounced a Nemesis Hex, thus setting the scene for a Dramatic Indictment.

A stern bailiff stalked to the lectern and shouted, "Wild Witches will now expose and condemn the massacre of women's minds, bodies, and spirits. Bring in the accused!" Accompanied by a thunderous beating of drums, black-robed members of the Witches' Chorus carried flamboyantly dressed, balloon-headed wooden dummies, representing agents of gynocide and biocide, down the aisle and onto the stage. Among the dummies were Jack the Ripper, figurehead for serial killers; Exxon, figurehead for Earth rapers of every kind; Sigmund Freud, figurehead for all professional mindfuckers; Boss-town College (dressed as a football wearing a roman collar), figurehead for the brain-drainers of academia.

After hearing the evidence in each case, the Witches of Boston (the whole audience) shouted: "GUILTY!"

As High Chaircrone, I sentenced the dummies to de-heading. "Off with their heads!" shouted the women, as the jailers, flourishing sharp-edged labryses, descended upon the accused and popped their balloon heads. After this event, more than one woman said, "Patriarchy doesn't exist Here, Now."

Such relief, inspiration, and reinvigoration were desperately needed, for outside the Space we had created the war against women was escalating. That same year, a smiling man wearing hunting clothes gunned down and killed fourteen women in the engineering school at the University of Montreal with a semiautomatic rifle. After lining the women up in a classroom, he snarled, "You're all fucking feminists." This atrocity received very little media attention. The double phenomenon of increasing violence against women and erasure of this reality was to become commonplace in the decade that followed.

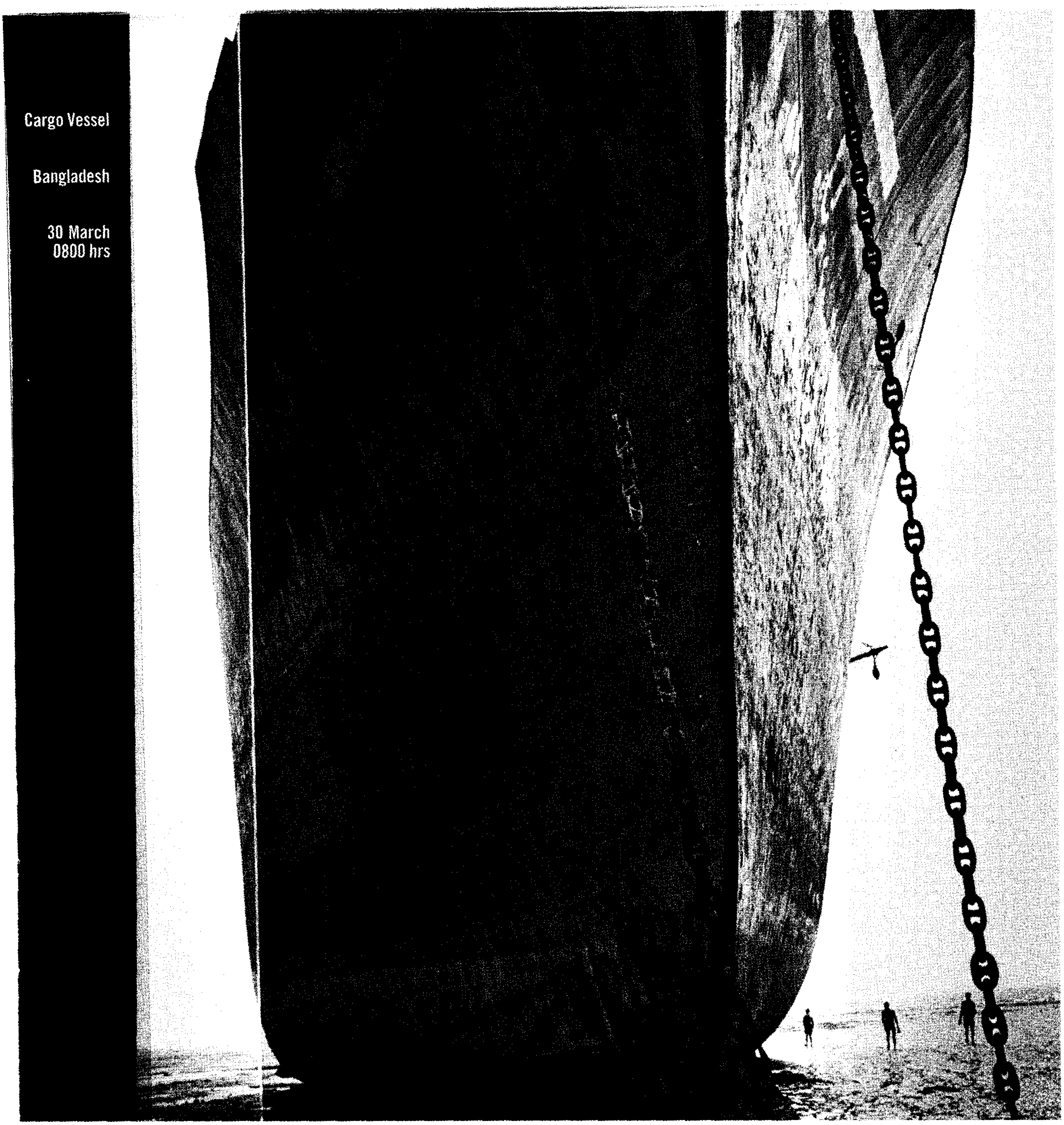
ROARING THROUGH THE NINETEEN-NINETIES: THE WRATH OF NEMESIS IS HERE

THE first Italian Lesbian Week was held in Bologna in 1991, shortly after "Beyond God the Father" was published in Italian. As part of the celebration, I gave a talk at the Sala dei Notai, the famed hall in the heart of Bologna. Nineteen ninety-two marked the publication of my philosophical autobiography, "Outercourse: The Be-Dazzling Voyage." In the late summer and early fall of 1994, I toured Switzerland and Germany with the German translation of the book. At the University of Fribourg, where, thirty years earlier, I had attended lectures delivered in Latin on medieval theology and philosophy, some women were actually studying and writing papers on "Gyn/Ecology." My heart skipped a beat when I learned this. But back in the United States, speaking around the country, I witnessed an upsurge of fear and rage, as gynocidal crimes became more numerous and more blatant. In December, 1994, Shannon Lowney, who had been one of my students, in 1989, in a course on feminist ethics, was murdered at a Planned Parenthood clinic in Brookline, Massachusetts, where abortions are performed, and where she worked as a receptionist.

During the course of this decade, it has become increasingly evident that "justice" under the asymmetric system of patriarchy is unattainable. It is even inconceivable. The prevailing order/ordure does not have the capacity to bestow the sought-after treasure. Yet there has been a surge of positive energy among women.

JUSTICE under the patriarchal system is depicted as a blindfolded woman holding a sword and scales. In contrast, Nemesis, the Goddess of divine retribution, has her eyes open and uncovered—especially her Third Eye. Moreover, she is less concerned with retribution in the sense of an external meting out of rewards and punishments than with an internal judgment that sets in motion a disruption of the patriarchal balance of terror. A new psychic alignment of energy patterns accompanies this disruption, patterns I am now at work Dis-covering and analyzing for my new book, "Quintessence: Re-Calling the Outrageous, Contagious Courage of Women."

IN this work, as in my Wickedary, I honor the work of Positively Revolting Hags. My definition of a true "Pro-Lifer" is "one who puts her Life on the line in the struggle against the necro-apocalyptic nobodies who are running/ruining the world." ♦



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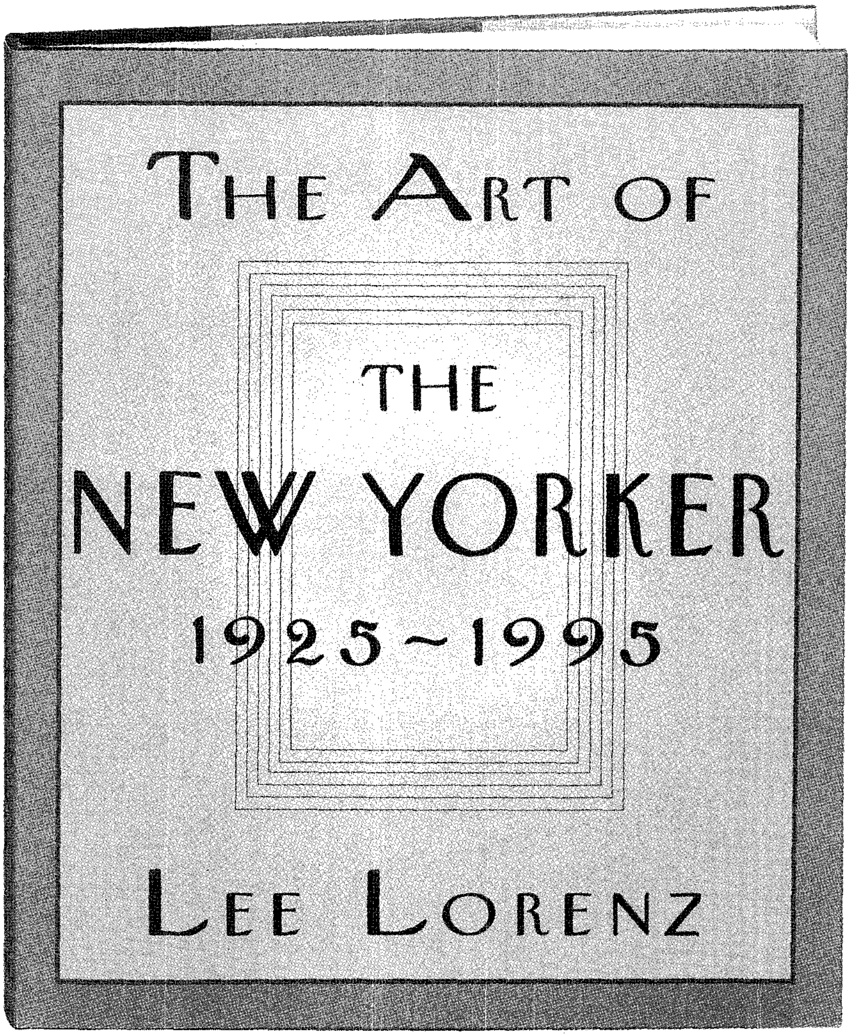

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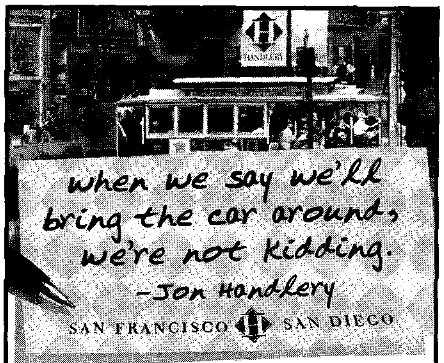

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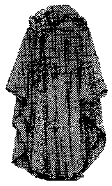

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LIFE AND LETTERS

THE ANGRY DIVIDE

Memories of an interrupted writer.

BY MAIRI MacINNES

Mairi MacInnes: "I hadn't the panache to clarify myself—not to begin with, anyway."

DANIEL SCHWARTZ

"I WANT you to be dependent," my mother said; I had been telling her what I wanted to do when I grew up.

Dependent? Forced to stick with her, Mummy's little girl? No, worse, it became clear, forced to be cherished by a man who'd see to it I never had to do a hand's turn. I'd be charming, he'd be rich. That was the current of her thought about herself, I see now, erroneously applied to me with no idea how it would rankle. I knew I would never be charming. I didn't want to be charming—I wanted my own way. In any case, we knew no rich people.

"And you shouldn't learn to cook, so your husband will have to provide you with plenty of servants."

"I shall never marry," I said.

Her good humor vanished. "I knew it! You'll be a mannish Highland spinster like your Aunt Mary. Or a B.A. B.A.s are *dirty*. I've never seen such a dirty house as that clever Mrs. Smith's."

I did not give a hoot for clean houses. My mother's was pretty, though. The moment you walked over the threshold, your heart lifted at the sight of her tomato-red carpet and fresh flowers and gleaming silver and the old oak furniture she'd carried out of derelict farmhouses and had repaired, and the pewter plates like moons on a dresser rack, and the brass fenders and scuttles and brass-topped pokers and tongs sunning at the hearth; a clean, warm, comfortable house, with good beds, hot water in the taps, good food on good plate: her bread, her cakes, her pies, her spiced beef, all famous.

Who cared? Not I. Then her campaign medals turned up in a drawer. Medals? Decorations, with their important grosgrain ribbons in watered reds and blues dangling from a pin, in a leather box from Spink of Piccadilly. Like a soldier's? Fingering them reflectively, my father spoke of life-and-death times when she'd been far from home, nursing in Greece during the Great War. That's where they'd met. She refused to fill in the details. But I knew then that in her heart she was not what she advised for me. And if she enforced the idea of dependency by keeping me at home with a governess till I was nine, when I was at last allowed to go to school, the effect was other than she intended. Bit by bit, taking my cue from others and from books, I followed my own bent.

My career went something like this: After publishing a book of poems and a novel (kindly reviewed—too kindly indeed), I married my true love and had children. We went to live in Berlin, where my husband was made a very young full professor, and later to his native land of the U.S.A., where he founded a department of comparative literature in a big university. And my writing, such as it was, dwindled near to zero. I wondered about love when it appeared to be a destructive force; I played Martha to my husband's Mary. Poor Martha, struggling away in the kitchen while Mary sat at the feet of the guest, the ultimate guest: Whom does the heart fly out to? Certainly not to Martha, complaining, told off, banging the plates on the table if she was at all like me.

While appalled about my inadequacy and about the hopelessness of poetry itself (as I still am), I realized only very slowly that the task was now to load the poetry with the life, our life together or the life that ensued from our being together: chiefly because in its rewards and frustrations it had a hardness about it that my previous life lacked. I'd been misled earlier into believing that good writing had to do with chance happenings and spontaneous combustion. Such a belief didn't consort with domestic life (which was no doubt why I'd adopted it). A decent domestic life called for planning and budgeting and the taking of infinite pains, anathema till then. The great prohibitors were now, I discovered, not the desire for children but children. And children were the great wealth, too, the benefactors, who weigh you down with gold till you can barely wag a finger. The idea that I might neglect a child had me waking at night in horror. And yet I neglected them. It is impossible not to neglect a child. Perhaps that is why we love them so much.

WHAT follows illustrates the worst, when the writing went under and the life began to follow it. We had just moved from Maine to New Jersey. We had a little boy and a six-week-old baby daughter. In less than a month, my husband took off on a mission to Europe. The hall was blocked with packing cases; it was August and tropically hot; the well became poisoned in the drought and started to give dark-red, smelly water; my milk dried up; the boy went bravely off to his new school, so I was alone with the baby all day; I was due to go back to my work as a medical editor in a matter of weeks. If I had some help in the house, I don't remember it. I felt I was drowning and my children were drowning with me. Just to drive out to buy bread and milk was a major undertaking. I fell asleep in the middle of the day and lay awake at night. Wandering through the unfamiliar garden in moonlight, I picked a small fruit like a plum and chipped a tooth on its stone, a front tooth. Letters from my husband gathered unread. He had gone first to visit my father—*my* father, not his. It seemed to me that my husband had taken over my life and there was nothing left for me, not even my father. (I had already seen the last of him, for he was to die just over a year later.)

Protest was useless. Life was unjust at the best of times and was only denying me briefly what it denied other women for a lifetime. I was not going to argue about justice and demand fair shares. That was beneath me. I would manage on my own. Other women did. Suppose I told him I would not be there when he came back: this is what I should have said, according to two of my friends. But where would I go with my small entourage? Even if I took all the money out of the bank and left, it wouldn't last long, and what then? How would I go on with my job without my husband's moral and physical

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support? Who was going to make love to me in the future? I couldn't think of anyone else I wished to be in bed with. Supposing I told my husband not to come back: he'd come back anyway, bursting open the locks and laughing. I imagined myself to be my husband, faced with a weeping accusing wife, a tiresome creature, flouncing and ridiculous; and a poem began itself immediately—in the midst of the chaos a show of wit and a force for order that came out of nowhere.

To my surprise, the woman I was depicting as a raving force of nature, one who angered and wore down the narrator (me), became the Muse. The poem ends with her calmly addressing the narrator (still me), telling him to bring his sheep, his lambs, the unborn poems, dear to him but strange, down from the hills of his imagination to a place where they are familiar and fearless. The narrator, hitherto masculine, here turns into the poet, the woman poet as it happens; the lambs are both her children and her poems.

I sent this effort to my husband, then in Paris, hoping he'd feel the sting, but heartsick all the same. A poem was less important than a human being.

So the days passed, and the self I'd objectified as the maenad, the wild shouting woman and then the Muse, assumed my mother's face. She had been dead for over a year. "So that's who you are now!" I said to her, surprised. For a dream moment we were together, not gesticulating over the angry divide that opened up when I went my own way, first into the university and then into the world of work.

"What a wonderful poem," wrote my husband from Paris; "one of your best." I never knew, I will never know, how much he understood my frustration: he had simply taken what was his and, I suppose, expected me to take what was mine. Money and time were short, though, the money and time a writer needs, and there were two of us, and I was far less proven than he was and, the more he wrote, the less and less proven in comparison.

"What else of the *worst*?" asks my conscience, my inquisitor, sneering a little. "And we thought you were so happy, dressing up, picking flowers, washing your stupid windows, talking to your friends, playing with the children."

Yes. To go back, to look at the oddest, most delicate of complaints: though I loved America, in a sense it escaped from me. I felt at home immediately, though the feeling ebbed with the years. At first, my husband rejoiced at his return to the easygoing society, the old friends, the old places, the academic world open to ideas and anyone's hard work, the parties at which a good deal of liquor was drunk and a good many jokes shouted into the dark as the guests departed. These things and many more enchanted me, too. Then, after the first heady months, my husband fell back into the depressions that had been such an unforeseen and shocking feature of the early years of our marriage. (How could he possibly feel low when he was married to me?) And privately I began to feel I was missing something essential.

We met each other not in long, discursive discussions, like those with old

LADIES' LUNCHEON

He pocketed one hand and waved the other.
Then I was gone, I suppose, and he went back to that earthy
apartness I fancy he preferred,

and painted, chopped, or scrubbed, and put a record on,
the splendid luminous vacancy of afternoon
invested with the rehearsed emotion

of opera stars whose rival voices
warbled in turn of loves and sadnesses,
regrets, mistakes, and agonies

he might have had to grin at, if I'd been there.
Meantime, transfixed in a thunderous hotel bar,
I had to read minds like a fortune-teller,

as the bar lacked air and the ceiling pressed down
and unmannerly bedlam
reigned from the first glass of gin.

I had to touch forty other women's lives
as a child presses its lips
to the mirror and kisses its very self—

lizardly eyes, skin on the cheeks hung loose,
crosshatched lips; reticulated necks,
heads bobbing yes, yes;

also their hands' mottle, with an occasional diamond;
dentists' teeth, laughing; the matched teeth of friends—
a creature forty times sliced end to end

to make tissue sections so neatly successful.
I thought of us wandering the world until
we met at this moment, radiantly whole—

and I saw with relief how we kicked at reunion
as each woman turned with her own smile of welcome,
and the worm wriggled in me, the blind hermaphrodite worm.

—Mairi MacInnes

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friends in years past, but in gestures, nuances, insinuations. Curiously enough, it helped not to talk things out; confusion cannot be challenged; there was no finality. The continuum rolled us to and fro like stones in a river mouth, made round and smooth by the tides. In a marriage there is always tomorrow, the apology, the explanation of bad behavior, the kiss. And outside marriage new friendships thickened things up. Yet the sense of loss—never nostalgia, plain and simple—and its counterpart, the sense that I was missing something, continued in the back of my head like a single note sustained so long that it appears part of nature. Only now, back in the North Country of my childhood, has the note completely died away, and I can hear truly again.

And it didn't help to be inept. I behaved ineptly early and late, but particularly once in my first summer, when we were involved in a party at Crane's Beach, in Massachusetts, to celebrate Labor Day. The weather was warm and soft, and so was the beach, with its clean sand, and the sky, darkening and pricking with stars as far out as you could see. People came with sleeping bags to spend the night out after feasting on lobsters and hot dogs and drinking beer and Coke, families of them, including children of all ages, though few as young as our son was then. I wasn't used to families in the American sense; I couldn't imagine my father and mother taking my brother and me on such an outing, and for some dull reason I declined the invitation to sleep out and decided to take my son back to the comfort and quiet of our cabin. The alternative was to spend a sleepless night and pay for it the next day.

As the flocks of children were being cajoled into sleeping bags, someone was singing to a guitar. Fires glowed along the beach and the tide whooshed below us as I staggered along the dunes with my small boy, who naturally wished to stay with the fun; he burst into tears, I couldn't find the car, we returned. The group I'd left were hanging on an anecdote told by a strikingly handsome woman with her strikingly handsome husband by her side. The story stopped in midair. My husband got to his feet, all concern. "I need help," I said loudly. Everyone froze. A scene from some sad Russian comedy.

I often got outside myself in those days to have a look at what was wrong, and saw a creature genteel and reserved to the point of idiocy, because that is how a woman from my country is perceived in the United States. The drive to conformity is very great, and I hadn't the panache to clarify myself—not to begin with, anyway.

I DID try my best to live my own life. I got a job and worked painstakingly at it. I liked earning my living, even if there seemed to be nothing left over by the time the babysitters and, later, the housekeeper had been paid and a second car put on the road. At another time I taught in a community college, until a doctor pronounced that our youngest child had two holes in his heart which would have to be plugged by a surgeon. The diagnosis was wrong, but we did not find out till I had given up my job to look after him.

Whether I worked or not, my husband was always immensely helpful in the house. He cooked well and liked being in charge. He assumed the serious upkeep of the house—reroofing, housepainting, digging up the cellar for a fouled drain, and mowing four acres of grass—not cheerfully but furiously, taming with kicks the domestic life that he felt threatened him. One day, I came home from work and found he had torn down a staircase in order to provide a blank wall for a large painting. There was another staircase, the old back stairs, so we could still go up to bed, and it must have felt masterful to have a go at so large a part of the house with a crowbar. But the old staircase had been beautiful, and it took weeks to remove the plaster and sawdust from the carpets and curtains and furniture that he had not thought to cover, and for months to take a book from a shelf meant dislodging a fine powder into sleeves. It was useless to say a word, so I didn't.

"YOU'RE saying it now, though, aren't you?" says the dear inquisitor. "Can't you admit that, after all those visits to Spain solo, he wrote a brilliant book about the bullfight? And the visits to France and Italy, too, and the Guggenheims, the fellowships, the honors—they were to advance the career that kept a roof over your head and paid the bills. And what of the books that came out of them, the books of criticism? You never approved of criticism, did you?"

Approval is neither here nor there. The criticism was excellent. It existed. Poetry didn't. I know I haven't a leg to stand on. So let me create one. Didn't I meet the planes, carry out cups of tea, and abet the forces that beat down on me? This was the most characteristic way of behaving I knew, and the comment that I managed at the time, in journals or half-finished poems, provided a just perspective. For years it was all I could do to find a few hours a week and a quiet place to write, that's all. Sometimes I'd stop the car on the side of the road and scribble. (Travel always jogs the imagination.)

"BUT what's going on here? Writing about the conflict within marriage puts in jeopardy just what you've been at pains to preserve. Why do you do it?"

I've suspected for years that literature itself is about fidelity and the efforts to escape it. And I ask myself, Have I managed to maneuver myself into this difficult position *on purpose*? And to venture one step further—can it be that writing poetry is not worth it? Look, for example, at the amount of bad poetry being written: Who can justify that? And yet most good poets have been bad poets once. Can anyone, least of all a woman responsible for children, afford to write badly as mastery is gained, considering the pains and the amount of time poetry demands?

"STILL writing poetry?" someone from London asked. I was the perpetual apprentice, beginning from scratch with each new poem. When publication and awards came, they were irrelevant. The best was that difficulties as I experienced them increasingly loaded the work with the life. My husband—after all, a writer, too—had faith that it would be so. ♦

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MY BEST WHITE FRIEND

Cinderella revisited.

BY PATRICIA J. WILLIAMS

My best white friend is giving me advice on how to get myself up like a trophy-wife-in-waiting. We are obliged to attend a gala fund-raiser for an organization on whose board we both sit. I'm not a wife of any sort at all, and she says she knows why: I'm prickly as all getout, I dress down instead of up, and my hair is "a complete disaster." My best white friend, who is already a trophy wife of considerable social and philanthropic standing, is pressing me to borrow one of her Real Designer gowns and a couple of those heavy gold bracelets that are definitely not something you can buy on the street.

I tell her she's missing the point. Cinderella wasn't an over-thirty black professional with an attitude. What sort of Master of the Universe is going to go for that?

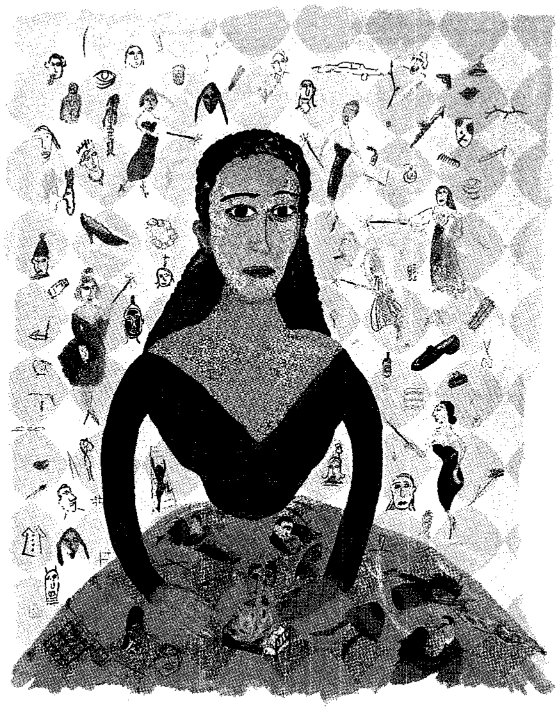
"You're not a *racist*, are you?" she asks.

"How could I be?" I reply, with wounded indignation. "What, being the American Dream personified and all."

"Then let's get busy and make you *up*," she says soothingly, breaking out the little pots of powder, paint, and polish.

From the first exfoliant to the last of the cucumber rinse, we fight about my man troubles. From powder base through lip varnish, we fight about hers.

You see, part of the problem is that white knights just don't play the same part in my mythical landscape of desire. If poor Cinderella had been black, it would have been a whole different story. I tell my best white friend the kind of stories my mother raised me on: about slave girls who worked their fingers to the bone for their evil half sisters, the "legitimate" daughters of their mutual father, the master of the manse, the owner of them all; about scullery maids whose oil-and-ashes complexions would not wash clean even after multiple waves of the wand. These were the ones who harbored impossible dreams of love for lost mates who had been sold down rivers of tears to oblivion. These were the ones who became runaways.



"We're all sisters under the makeup."

MAIRA KALMAN

"Just think about it," I say. "The human drama is compact enough so that when my mother was little she knew women who had been slaves, including a couple of runaways. Cinderellas who had burned their masters' beds and then fled for their lives. It doesn't take too much, even across the ages, to read between those lines. Women who invented their own endings, even when they didn't get to live happily or very long thereafter."

My best white friend says, "Get a grip. It's just a party."

I'VE called my best white friend my best white friend ever since she started calling me her best black friend. I am her only black friend, as far as I know, a circumstance for which she blames "the class thing." At her end of the social ladder, I am *my* only black friend—a circumstance for which I blame "the race thing."

"People should stop putting so much emphasis on color—it doesn't matter whether you're black or white or blue or green," she says from beneath an avocado mask.

Lucky for you, I think, even as my own pores are expanding or contracting—I forget which—beneath a cool neon-green sheath.

IN fact, I have been looking forward to the makeover. M.B.W.F. has a masseuse and a manicurist and colors in her palette like Après Sun and Burnt Straw, which she swears will match my skin tones more or less.

"Why don't they just call it Racial Envy?" I ask, holding up a tube of Deep Copper Kiss.

"Now, now, we're all sisters under the makeup," she says cheerfully.

"When ever will we be sisters without?" I grumble.

I've come this far because she's convinced me that my usual slapdash routine is the equivalent of being "unmade"; and being unmade, she underscores, is a most exclamatory form of unsophistication. "Even Strom Thurmond wears a little pancake when he's in public."

M.B.W.F. is somewhat given to hyperbole, but it *is* awfully hard to bear, the thought of making less of a fashion statement than old Strom. I do draw the line, though. She has a long history of nips, tucks, and liposuction. Once, I tried to suggest how appalled I was, but I'm not good at being graceful when I have a really strong opinion roiling up inside. She dismissed me sweetly: "You can afford to disapprove. You are aging *so* very nicely."

There was the slightest pause as I tried to suppress the anxious rise in my voice: "You think I'm aging?"

Very gently, she proceeded to point out the flawed and falling features that give me away to the carefully trained

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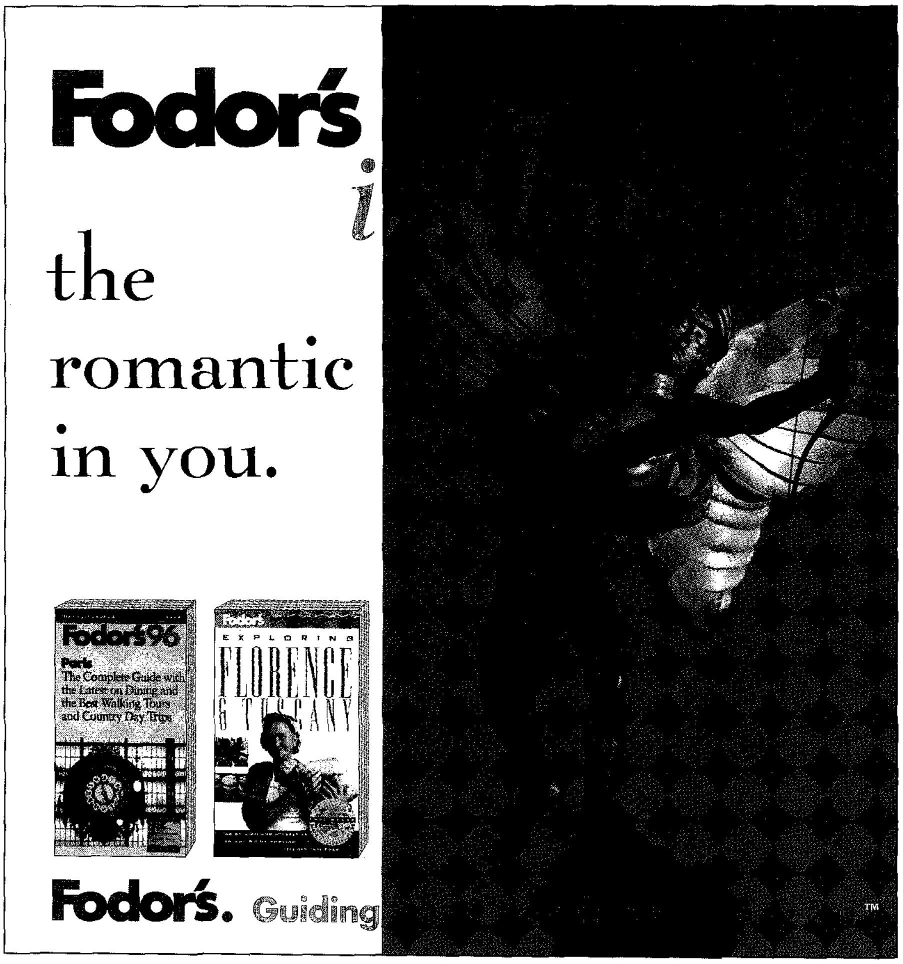
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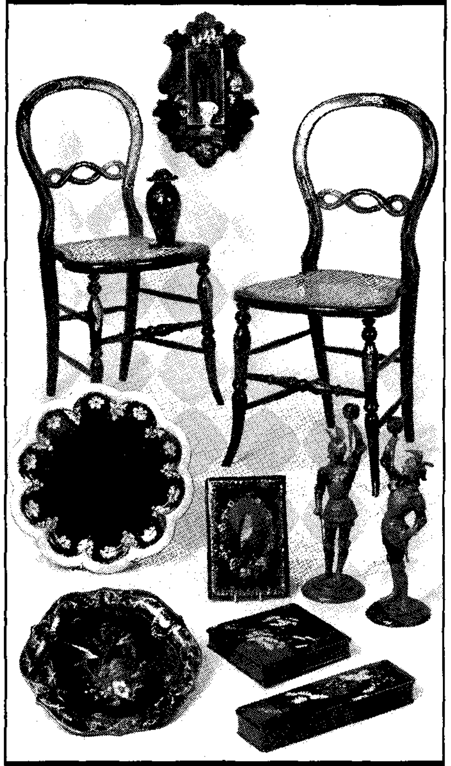

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eye, the insistent voyeur. There were the pores. And those puffs beneath my eyes. No, not there—those are the bags under my eyes. The bags aren't so bad, according to her—no deep wrinkling just yet. But keep going—the puffs are just below the bags. Therein lies the facial decay that gives my age away.

I had never noticed them before, but for a while after that those puffs just dominated my face. I couldn't look at myself for their explosive insolence—the body's betrayal, obscuring every other feature.

I got over it the day we were standing in line by a news rack at the Food Emporium. Gazing at a photo of Princess Diana looking radiantly, elegantly melancholic on the cover of some women's magazine, M.B.W.F. snapped, "God! Bulimia must work!"

THIS is not the first time M.B.W.F. has shepherded me to social doom. The last time, it was a very glitzy cocktail party where husband material supposedly abounded. I had a long, businesslike conversation with a man she introduced me to, who, I realized as we talked, grew more and more fascinated by me. At first, I was only conscious of winning him over; then I remember becoming aware that there was something funny about his fierce infatuation. I was *surprising* him, I slowly realized. Finally, he came clean: he said that he had never before had a conversation like this with a black person. "I think I'm in love," he blurted in a voice bubbling with fear.

"I think not," I consoled him. "It's just the power of your undone expectations, in combination with my being a basically likable person. It's throwing you for a loop. That and the Scotch, which, as you ought to know, is inherently depoliticizing."

I remember telling M.B.W.F. about him afterward. She had always thought of him as "that perfect Southern gentleman." The flip side of the Southern gentleman is the kind master, I pointed out. "Bad luck," she said. "It's true, though—he's the one man I wouldn't want to be owned by, if I were you."

MY best white friend doesn't believe that race is a big social problem anymore. "It's all economics," she insists. "It's how you came to be my *friend*"—for once, she does not qualify me as black—"the fact that we were both in college together." I feel compelled to remind her that affirmative action is how both of us ended up in the formerly all-male bastion we attended.

The odd thing is, we took most of the same classes. She ended up musically proficient, gifted in the art of interior design, fluent in the mother tongue, whatever it might be, of the honored visiting diplomat of the moment. She actively aspired, she says, to be "a cunning little meringue of a male prize."

"You," she says to me, "were always more like Gladys Knight."

"Come again?" I say.

"Ethnic woman warrior, always on that midnight train to someplace else, intent on becoming the highest-paid Aunt Jemima in history."

"Ackh," I cough, a sudden strangulation of unmade thoughts fluttering in my windpipe.

THE night after the cocktail party, I dreamed that I was in a bedroom with a tall, faceless man. I was his breeding slave. I was trying to be very, very good, so that I might one day earn my freedom. He did not trust me. I was always trying to hide some essential part of myself from him, which I would preserve and take with me on that promised day when I was permitted to leave; he felt it as an innate wickedness in me, a darkness that he could not penetrate, a dangerous secret that must be wrested from me. I tried everything I knew to please him; I walked a tightrope of anxious servitude and survivalist withholding. But it was not good enough. One morning, he just reached for a sword and sliced me in half, to see for himself what was inside. A casual flick, and I lay dead on the floor in two dark, unyielding halves; in exasperated disgust, he stepped over my remains and rushed from the room, already late for other business, leaving the cleanup for another slave.

"YOU didn't dream that!" M.B.W.F. says in disbelief.

"I did so."

"You're making it up," she says. "People don't really have dreams like that."

"*I* do. Aren't I a people, too?"

"That's amazing! Tell me another."

"O.K., here's a fairy tale for you," I say, and tell her I dreamed I was being held by Sam Malone, the silly, womanizing bartender on "Cheers." He was tall, broad-chested, good-looking, unbelievably strong. My head, my face were pressed against his chest. We were whispering our love for each other. I was moved deeply, my heart was banging, he held me tight and told me that he loved me. I told him that I loved him, too. We kissed so that heaven and earth moved in my heart; I wanted to make love to him fiercely. He put a simple thick gold band on my finger. I turned and, my voice cracking with emotion and barely audible, said, "What's this?" He asked me to marry him. I told him yes, I loved him, yes, yes, I loved him. He told me he loved me, too. I held out my hand and admired the ring in awe. I was the luckiest woman on earth.

Suddenly Diane Chambers, Sam's paramour on "Cheers," burst through the door. She was her perky, petulant self, bouncing blond hair and black-green eyes like tarnished copper beads, like lumps of melted metal—eyes that looked carved yet soft, almost brimming. She turned those soft-hard eyes on me and said, "Oh no, Sam, not tonight—you promised!"

And with that I realized that I was to be consigned to a small room on the other side of the house. Diane followed me as I left, profusely apologetic with explanations: she was sorry, and she didn't mind him being with me once or twice a month, but this was getting ridiculous. I realized that I was Sam's part-time mistress—a member of the household somehow, but having no rights.

Then Diane went back into the master bedroom and Sam came in to apologize, to say that there had been a mixup, that it was just this once, that he'd make it up to me, that he was sorry. And, of course, I forgave him, for there was nothing I wanted more than to relive the moment when he held me tightly and our love was a miracle and I was the only woman he wanted in the world, forever.

"HAVE you thought of going into therapy?" she jokes.

"As a matter of fact, I have," I say, sighing and rubbing my temples. "On average, we black women have bigger, better problems than any other women alive. We bear the burden of being seen as pretenders to the thrones of both femininity and masculinity, endlessly mocked by the ambiguously gendered crown-of-thorns imagery of 'queen'—Madame Queen, snap queen, welfare queen, quota queen, Queenie Queen, *Queen* Queen Queen. We black women are figured more as stand-ins for men, sort of like reverse drag queens: women pretending to be women but more male than men—bare-breasted, sweat-glistened, plow-pulling, sole supporters of their families. Arnold Schwarzenegger and Sylvester Stallone meet Sojourner Truth, the *Real* Real Thing, the Ace-of-Spades Gender Card Herself, Thelma and Louise knocked up by Wesley Snipes, the ultimate hard-drinking, tobacco-growing-and-aspitting, nut-crushing ball-buster of all time. . . . I mean, think about it—how'd you like to go to the ball dressed like a walking cultural pathology? Wouldn't it make you just a wee bit tense?"

"But," she sputters, "but—you always seem so *strong!*"

We have just about completed our toilette. She looks at my hair as though it were a rude construction of mud and twigs, bright glass beads, and flashy bits of tinfoil. I look at hers for what it is—the high-tech product of many hours of steam rollers, shine enhancers, body spritzers, perms, and about eighteen hundred watts of blow-dried effort. We gaze at each other with the deep disapproval of one gazing into a mirror. It is inconceivable to both of us that we have been friends for as long as we have. We shake our heads in sympathetic unison and sigh.

One last thing: it seems we have forgotten about shoes. It turns out that my feet are much too big to fit into any of her sequinned little evening slippers, so I wear my own sensible square-soled pumps. My prosaic feet, like overgrown roots, peek out from beneath the satiny folds of the perfect dress. She looks radiant; I feel dubious. Our chariot and her husband await. As we climb into the limousine, her husband lights up a cigar and holds forth on the reëmerging popularity of same. My friend responds charmingly with a remarkably detailed production history of the Biedermeier humidor.

I do not envy her. I do not resent her. I do not hold my breath. ◆

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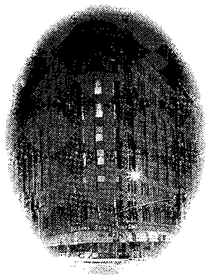

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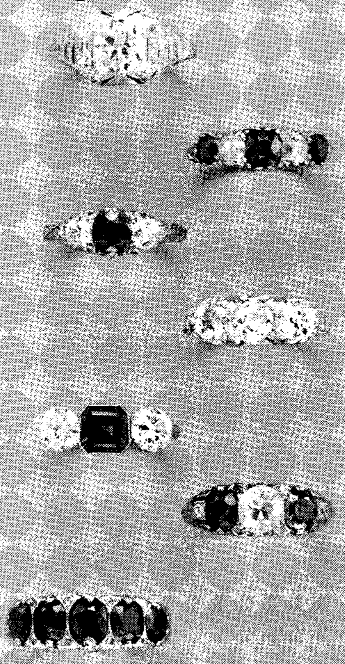

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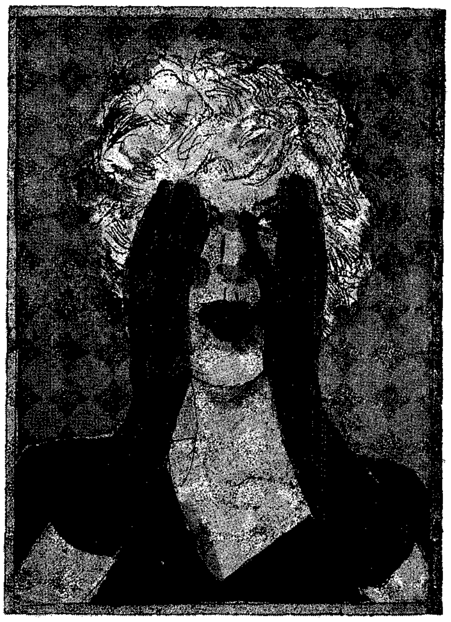
PERSONAL HISTORY

UNLIKELY OBSESSION

Confronting a taboo.

BY DAPHNE MERKIN

ON the bookshelves abutting the desk at which I write is a seemingly haphazard collection of volumes. These shelves, of honey-colored wood becomingly scarred by age and relocation, contain classic writerly guides; a variety of dictionaries, thesauruses, and compendiums of quotations; texts on depression, spanning the popular and the esoteric; and a selection of favorites like Cyril Connolly's "The Evening Colonnade," an out-of-print edition of "The Widow's Children," by Paula Fox, and worn blue galleys of Andrew Motion's biography of Philip Larkin. Pride of place, however, is given over to books on a subject that has been a source of secret fascination to me for as far back as I can remember: sadomasochism (S & M, or S/M, in the jaded shorthand that's current). This group, a changing exhibit with some permanent installations, includes a mini-library of the vast psychoanalytic literature surrounding S & M, ranging from Theodor Reik's classic "Masochism in Sex and Society" through Jessica Benjamin's "The Bonds of Love" to the entire œuvre of the psychiatrist Robert Stoller. And then there's the fiction: two paperback copies of "9½ Weeks," which has not lost its hold on my imagination since I first bought it in hardcover, seventeen years ago; "Story of O," although this stalwart piece of porn has never given me quite the *frisson* it seems to have elicited in so many other women; "Nothing Natural," by Jenny Diski, a 1986 British novel, its relevant pages ("He delicately edged her knickers down using the tips of his thumb and forefinger") carefully folded over; and some cheesier stuff, like "The Story of Monique" and "Half Dressed, She Obeyed"—books that get straight down to the business at hand without indulging in any niceties. (From the foreword to "The Training of Mrs. Pritchard": "Dolly knew that her husband had a violent temper, but she rarely provoked his anger. She knew that if she did, she'd wind up with a burning, red hot ass!")



How had an independent-minded woman managed to cultivate an impulse toward humiliation?

ROBERT ANDREW PARKER

Perhaps my favorite of the lot is "Spanking the Maid," a slim novel by Robert Coover, which obsessively recounts the daily life of an eager but imperfect maid who is forever being ordered to pull down her flannelette drawers and bend over for a variety of corrective measures from her master. ("Sometimes he stretches her across his lap. Sometimes she must bend over a chair or the bed, or lie flat out on it, or be horsed over the pillows, the dresser or a stool.") I suppose I love the Coover because it speaks both to the literary snob in me and to my baser—my debasement-*seeking*—sexual self. There is something mesmerizing about the novel's repetitiveness, the way it veils its randy core with tireless wordplay and Talmudic inventories: "Sometimes he uses a rod, sometimes his hand, his belt, sometimes a whip, a cane, a cat-o'-nine-tails, a bull's pizzle, a hick-

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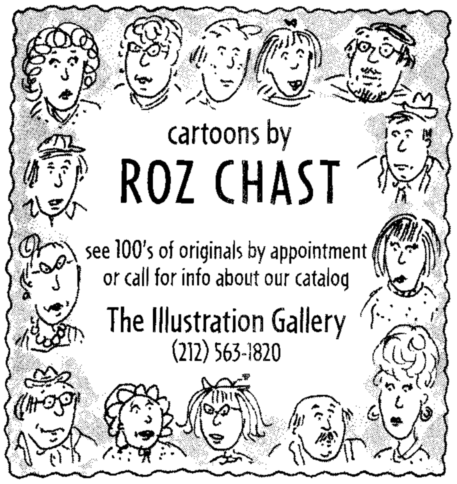

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ory switch, a martinet, ruler, slipper, a leather strap, a hairbrush."

The fact is that I cannot remember a time when I didn't think about being spanked as a sexually gratifying act, didn't fantasize about being reduced to a craven object of desire by a firm male hand. Depending on my mood, these daydreams were marked by an atmosphere of greater or lesser ravishment, but all of them featured similar ingredients. Most important among them was a heightened—and deeply pleasurable—sense of exposure, brought about by the fact that enormous attention was being paid to my bottom, and by the fact that there was an aspect of helpless display attached to this particular body part. This scenario, in which my normally alert self was reduced to a condition of wordless compliance via a specific ritual of chastisement, exerted a grip that was the more strong because I felt it to be so at odds with the intellectually weighty, morally upright part of me. Although I tend to be loquacious bordering on confessional with my friends, the discomfort I felt about my interest in erotic discipline and what it might suggest about me necessitated a degree of privacy that I was otherwise disinclined to observe. But even as I write the foregoing I feel a sense of relief (as well as shame) at finally giving voice to this confession, at putting down on paper, under my own name, what I know to be true of myself.

WHEN did it get started? And why? How long has it taken me to progress from fantasy to actually playing my own version of "Spanking the Maid"? I am not an adventurous person—far from it. I shy away from going to movies alone, much less travelling by myself, and I managed to get through college and two years of graduate school in the seventies without inhaling and with my virginity intact. I am so wedded to the familiar that I hold on with the tenacity of a bulldog to relationships that have outgrown their usefulness. And yet I am drawn to the psychic hang-gliding that is implicit in the enterprise of sadomasochism, to its brute strictures of submission and dominance. What is still more curious is that allowing myself to be treated as a naughty girl who must be punished (albeit one with womanly breasts and pubic hair)

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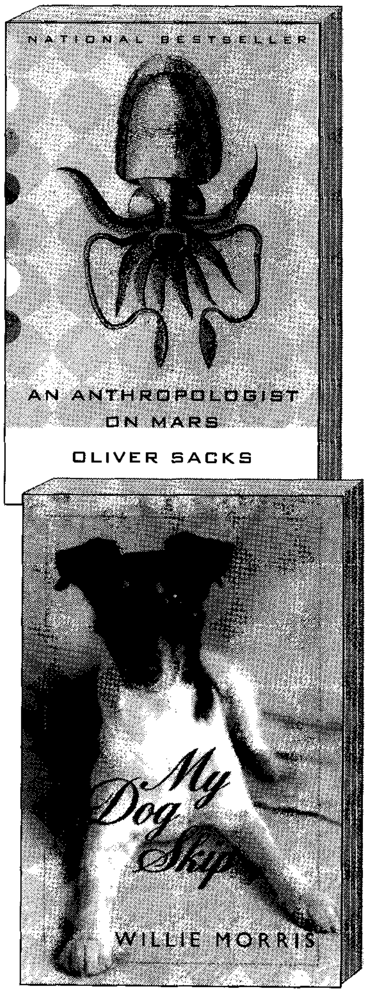

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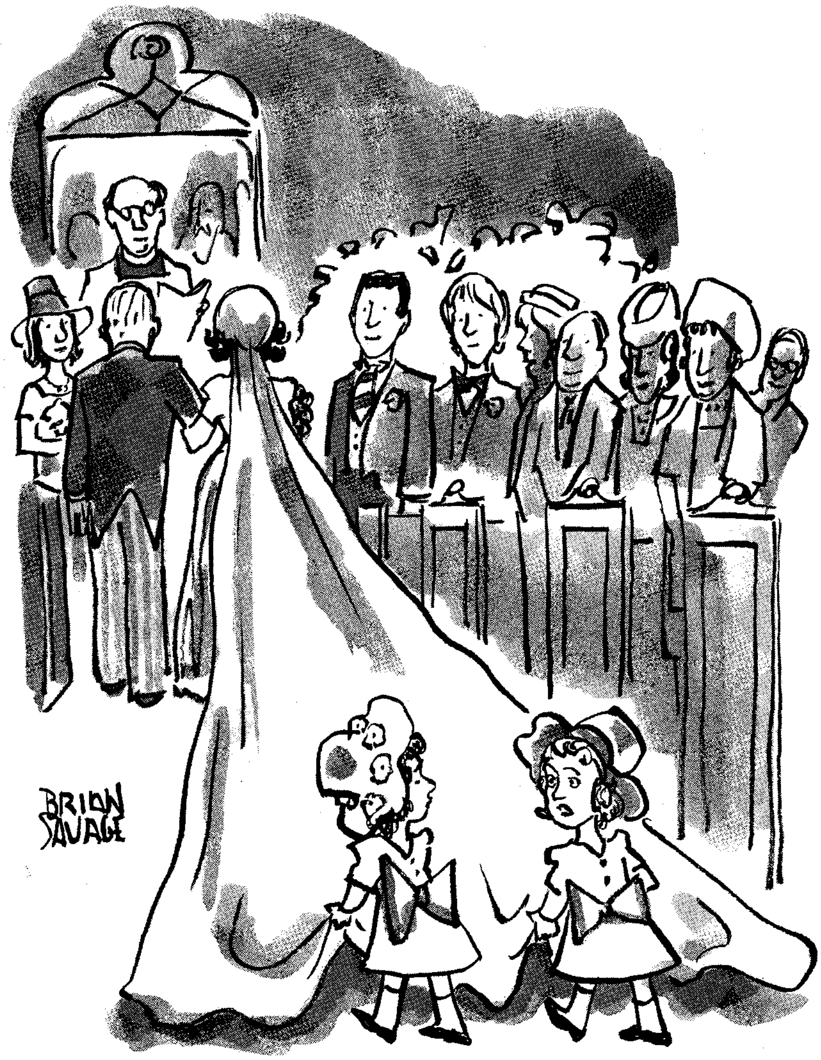

"It's all about power—getting it and keeping it."

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not only arouses me but actually soothes me—enables me to jump over my own shadow, across the inhibitions that impede me, and to land on the other side of sexual pleasure, at a place where the body takes over and the mind leaves off.

On the surface, it seems incongruous that I, a conscientious Upper East Side mother, who avoids corporal punishment of her young daughter in favor of more enlightened approaches to child-rearing, should be attracted to the stuff of Victorian nannies and their charges. I don't think I have ever seen any of my friends spank their children, and I am always astonished by the blind "what was good for me is good for them" vehemence with which physical discipline is sometimes espoused as a virtue capable of curing all social ills, from teenage pregnancies to drug abuse. How had it come to be that an expensively self-aware (thanks to decades of therapy), putatively independent-minded woman like me had managed to cultivate an impulse toward sexual humiliation alongside an impulse toward normative life? It was a conundrum. But, as with all puzzles, the clues were strewn everywhere, if one only knew where to begin looking and had the courage not to deny what turned up.

I DON'T remember myself being spanked as a child, although I know that I was. The family I grew up in was more Victorian than not: its atmosphere was formal and rule-ridden, and a strict sense of hierarchy—of observable difference in power and privilege between adults and children—prevailed at all times. (I recall being acutely conscious, when I visited friends' houses, of the more casual relations that existed between many parents and their children—a state of fluid near-parity rather than constantly delineated inequality.) Some of this was attributable to the fact that my parents were European—Orthodox German-Jewish, to be specific—but other circumstances were at play as well. There were six of us children, and very little attention to go around. My father was terrifying and distant, surrounded by a moat of professional and worldly concerns—his business, the synagogue, philanthropy. I don't think he ever came to see me in school or discussed my progress with my teachers; the only important occasion on which I recall his being present was my high-school graduation. My mother was mercurial, and I sensed, early on, something hardened in her response to the inner lives of her children; there was a way in which she failed to take in our distress and make it her own but, rather, stood outside, coolly observing it. "Your tears don't move me," she used to say when I came into her bedroom, crying over some slight or grievance that she considered unworthy.

I have often noticed that one of the redeeming aspects of households with difficult or inaccessible parents is the existence of a benign stand-in, a nurse or governess who connects to her charges with all the warmth that is otherwise lacking. (I think of Winston Churchill, who addressed his adored governess by the nickname Woomany.) My family had no such happy mother substitute; instead, there was an overworked nanny, who was herself one of an alarmingly populous brood of sixteen, and was not inclined to respect the individual natures of the many children in her care. At any rate, she was under orders to keep us quiet, especially after my father returned home from his office. The nanny had an odd relationship with my mother, whom she seemed to regard with respect verging on fear (in later years, I came to read their dynamic as itself having an S & M quality about it), but with me and my siblings she was given carte blanche to do what she saw fit to insure good behavior. Her means included spankings, which were administered sometimes with her very strong hand and once in a while with the back of a hairbrush. And though I seem to have blocked out any precise memories of being spanked myself, I do remember being scared of the nanny and of her considerable physical

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"Those who know us, love us."

force, evidenced by the muscles in her forearms. I remember, too, the slow-motion way in which she used to pull one of my younger brothers over her knees and then spank him for what seemed like hours.

Was the nanny herself excited by the spankings; does that explain the magic circle I drew around the activity? I can't say for certain, but when I look back on my young self standing in the doorway and watching my brother being punished, I think I construed those spankings to be a form of love. The humiliation was safely someone else's, as were the tears, but there was something to be envied in all that attention and energy applied to a little boy's round, bare bottom. Spankings involve physical contact, after all, and there was very little touching in our house; they might even be said to be no more than overly vigorous caresses, resulting in momentarily reddened flesh but no great harm. There was something else as well: the spankings had a distinct beginning and end, after which life went back to its usual contours. By contrast, my mother's punitive style was much less succinct: she could go for days without talking to me, and even after we made up there was always the danger of another fight, so that nothing was ever clearly before—or after—the moment of transgression. The psychological discomfort I felt with my mother was immense because it was so unpredictable: Would she be in a good mood or a destructive one toward me on a particular day? The limited physical discomfort of receiving a spanking seemed a freedom of sorts when set against emotional pain that might go on forever and ever.

Like anyone who expends a lot of energy in keeping his or her passion a secret, I always longed for company. For years now, I've kept a mental list, spanning the centuries and various levels of fame, of people who go in for amatory discipline: Jean-Jacques Rousseau admitted to being a committed spankee in his "Confessions," and Swinburne swooned for a good flagellation. In Hollywood, Peter Lawford apparently wanted to be beaten, and Jack Nicholson is reputed to like giving spankings. Kenneth Tynan, according to both his wives, was famously obsessed with what's often been called "the English vice." (It's unclear to me whether the British actually have a unique penchant for this form of sexual play or whether they've simply referred to it in print more frequently.) I was constantly on the lookout: when I watched late-night TV, even a quick shot of John Wayne—an actor who has never remotely appealed to me—landing a smack on the upturned, fully clothed bottom of some flailing actress was enough to stir my erotic soul. "Bottom," "ass," "rump," "behind," "rear end," "tush," "fanny," "nates": none sufficiently evoke for me the orblike vulnerability of that area—how the image of a woman's presenting it, her underpants pulled down to somewhere below the knees, thrilled me. (Technically, the complete rather than the partial removal of underpants has always been less stimulating to my imagination; this has something to do, I guess, with the implicitly temporary nature of the act of submission, and with the potential for retrieval of both coverage and dignity.)

Curiously, over the years I've devoted to therapy, I've rarely discussed this byway of my psychological being—maybe because I cannot conceive of mentioning the subject without envisioning the therapist in question, male or female, immediately envisioning *me* in the position under discussion. Although a woman therapist should be easier in this regard, I have not found it to be the case. Not long ago, I finally disclosed my furtive yen to my current (male) shrink, who opined that "violence isn't foreplay": he's right, of course, but, as I tried to explain to him, a certain amount of violence lubricates my mind and—strangely—releases me, if only for a moment, from my vigilant distrust of men. He did concede that the number of women patients who over the years have confided their fantasies of being spanked with a paddle or a badminton racquet (!) was, in his words, "mind-boggling." (Perhaps the "Belle de Jour"-like fantasy of being tamed—which men are reported to share, in large numbers—grows all the stronger in times that encourage sexual parity: equality between men and women, or even the pretext of it, takes a lot of work and may not in any case be the surest route to sexual excitement.)

"What's the right age to tell him he's stuffed?"

As a teen-ager, I dimly intuited that there were people besides myself caught up in these embarrassing longings. And somewhere along the way I rebelled against the tawdry closetedness of the whole thing and began toying with the idea of airing my wishes in the outside

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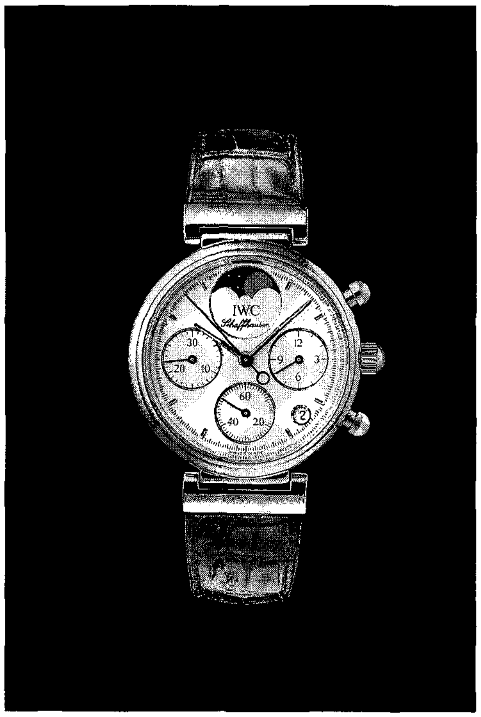

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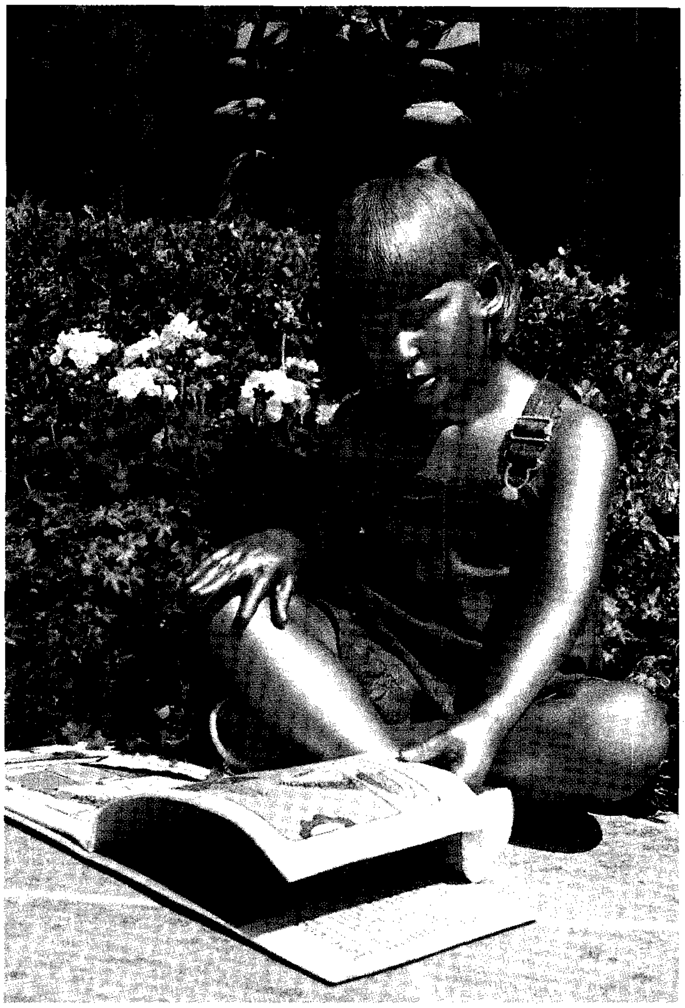

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world. For starters, I found it increasingly difficult to move among members of the opposite sex. I couldn't encounter anyone—from my Shakespeare professor to the irritable pharmacist who filled my antidepressant prescriptions—without wondering whether he silently yearned to turn me over his knee. (I cultivated what I imagined to be a suitably provocative manner, half brazen and half diffident, the better to catch gleanings of this intention wherever it smoldered.) I was in my early twenties when I finally made friends with another would-be spankee. She was several years older, a literary type like myself, and, between discussions of favorite movies and parallel mother obsessions, we stumbled upon our shared romance with erotic discipline.

Although K. had acres of sexual as well as extrasexual experience on me (including an intimate acquaintance with all manner of illegal drugs), she was a virgin as far as spankings were concerned. We excitedly discussed the probability of getting a man to "do it" to us: neither of us seemed remotely like the sort of young woman who would tolerate such a practice, much less invite it. It was with K. that I went to a porno store on Eighth Avenue in search of topical literature; I kept watch outside while she ventured in and eventually exited with several thin paperbacks, which we perused with greater application than was warranted. What we were looking for was something that didn't exist—a key that would open the door, a path that would link our social presentation of ourselves, as autonomous female beings, with our latent existences as penitentially inclined subordinates. At the time, K. was going out with a man who seemed up for anything: threesomes, anonymous pickups, on-camera sex, and the like. She and I planned a scenario in which she would leave a hairbrush lying next to the bed and would somehow get her boyfriend to understand, in the course of the evening, that he was to use the back of said brush on her bottom. We endlessly revised the dialogue that would enable her to procure the fulfillment of this dream; the trick of it was that her speaking part had to be suggestive without her having to ask directly for what she wanted. (The idea of actually announcing to a man that one wanted to be spanked struck both of

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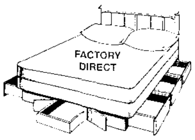

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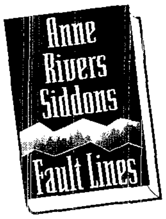

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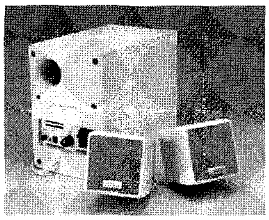

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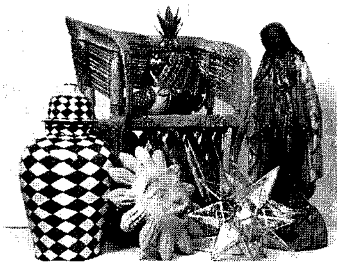

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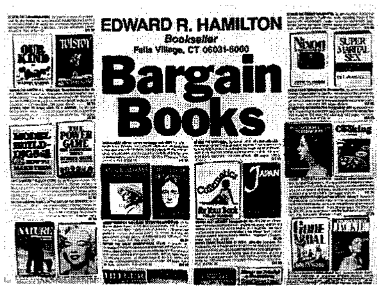
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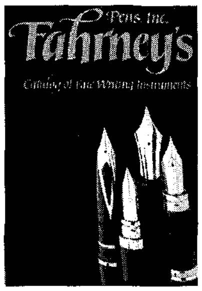
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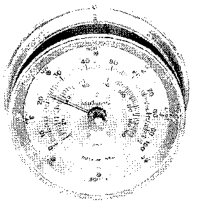

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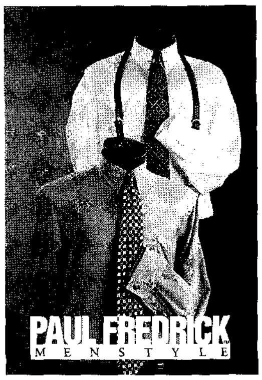

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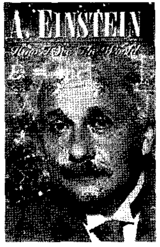

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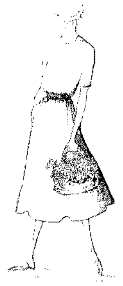

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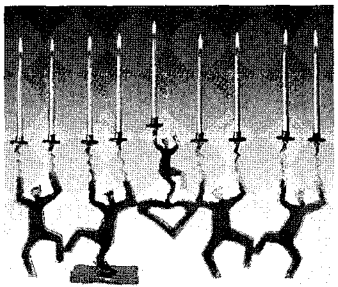

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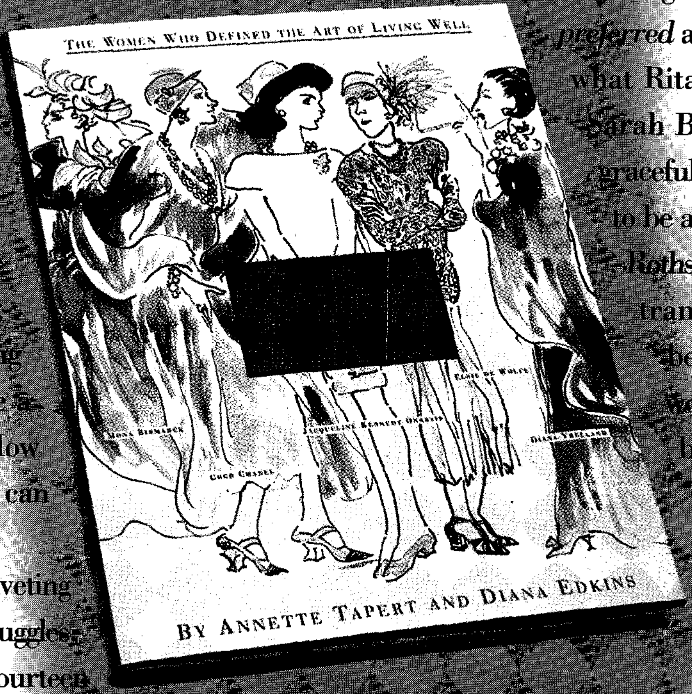
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us as compromising beyond words.) The brush lay there invitingly, inches from where K. frolicked between the sheets with the man to whom nothing erotic was alien, but it—the "it" toward which we schemed and plotted—never happened.

As time passed, the question loomed with increasing urgency: Would my desires have to remain in the realm of fantasy forever? How would I ever be able to ask for what I wanted? I couldn't imagine that "nice" guys—the kind I tended to meet, lawyers and their ilk, solid citizens in the making who molded their careers and their love lives with equal caution—gave much thought to spanking as a pastime. Would they recoil in disgust if they knew that this was what I wanted? The men I dated saw me as a formidable—if not to say bristling—adult woman, rather than as a child, still transfixed by the past.

THERE was something else holding me back, and it had to do with my fear of wading in too deep even before I took the first step. From the start, the boundaries of my sadomasochistic wishes had never been clear to me; I maintained that they were confined to spanking and naughty-little-girl stuff, but this didn't explain my fascination with the further ends of enslavement and pain. What worried me was that fantasies, however extended and baroque, were safe, whereas enactments of fantasy, however limited, were potentially risky—if only because the question of where to stop would always arise. How hard it was to put parameters around this subject, to delineate where sexual games turned into something rougher—not just a bit of fun but a near-lethal dose of harm. Did one proceed, inevitably, from hands to paddles to whips to chains to being strung up on pulleys? Within the flexible context of the sadomasochistic universe, the margin of error struck me as enormous. Where did you draw the line between mutually agreed-upon love play, however aggressive, and domestic abuse? (The spectre of Hedda Nussbaum haunted me once that case hit the press.) Adding to the confusion was the fact that, beginning in the eighties, the S & M subculture had come out into the open with almost evangelical zeal, presenting itself as yet

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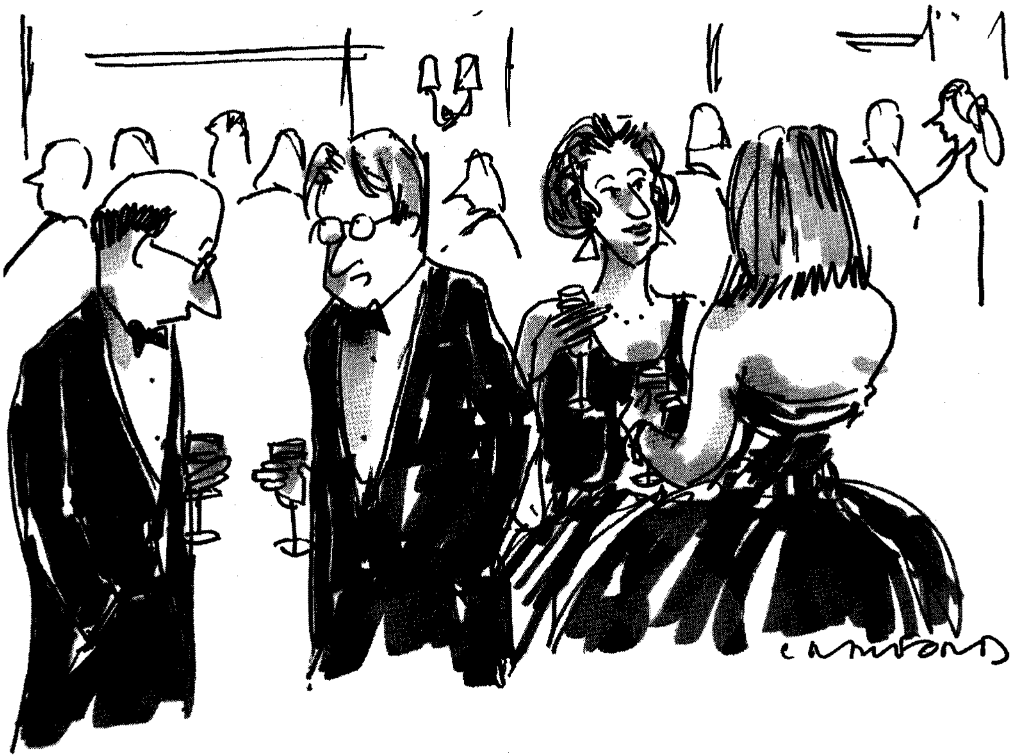

"Uh-oh. I think they're having a Bryn Mawr moment."

• •

one more option among a smorgasbord of sexual courses. This culture discoursed learnedly about "tops" (sadists) and "bottoms" (masochists). Paradoxically, the "bottom" is viewed as having the greater degree of power in the relationship, because of the opportunity for having his or her wishes more directly met—and also because the "bottom" is supposed to have the ability to control the degree of violence in a given encounter by using a previously arranged code word, called the "safeword."

Another term repeatedly alluded to by serious S & M philosophes—who often appear to consider themselves in the vanguard, striding toward new horizons that the rest of the population has yet to glimpse—is "consensual." This word contains the kernel of their rationale, such as it is, because it posits volition as the crucial differentiating factor between being clobbered or tied up for the pleasure at the end of the pain and humiliation rather than for the inherent abuse. All this struck me as problematic at best, and I used to think often of Groucho Marx's famous self-hating chestnut about not wanting to belong to any club that would accept him as a member. The idea of consorting with people who base a significant part of their identity on their proclivities for being whipped or put on a leash seemed inconceivable to me, as inconceivable as joining a Tuesday-night bowling club.

So, despite my intense curiosity, I never frequented an S & M bar or thought of answering S & M-tinged personals. I could see why many women confined their adventures to reading about S & M or bondage and discipline (B & D, for the initiated). My own cautionary example involved a woman I met who hung out with an S & M club downtown called the Eulenspiegel Society: when she ended up being beaten black and blue (even on her face), I realized that she and I were talking a different language of aberrant desire.

All the while, I continued to read and dream, feeding my appetite. In my mid-twenties, I met a man who had fairly advanced sadistic skills, albeit of a psychological rather than a physical variety. His wish to control me—to offer and then withdraw affection on an erratic and hurtful schedule of his own devising—coincided with my secret wish to be mastered, but it never occurred to him to spank me, and I never asked. (I was undoubtedly afraid of what I might unleash: I had visions of being splattered against the wall.) Our relationship may not have taken on an explicitly S & M aspect, but it was riddled with those impulses: once, after a fight, he ordered me to get down on my knees before his standing, undressed self; another time, he lay on the bed and languidly suggested that I crawl across the floor in order to win back his favor. Although these were not things I wanted to be told to do on a regular basis, my mind read both of these demands as a signal for arousal. I experienced degradation (or, at least, a degree of degradation) as a thrill; there was no mistaking it. I wondered with growing anxiety how I would ever make do with less dubious forms of sexual engagement.

Finally, in my late twenties, I admitted my wish to be spanked to a man who seemed distant from my world, and thus not in a position to assess how fitting or incongruous this wish might be with the rest of me. He was from the West Coast; to my intractably Manhattanite sensibilities, he might as well have hailed from Sri Lanka. Whereas I was accustomed to the edgy New York style, this man's way of looking at things seemed slower and less driven by the need to evaluate. He also had a receptive quality that made me think I could trust him with my fantasy, and, after we'd been going out for several months, I did. He appeared delighted at the prospect of implementing my wishes, and so it was that I found myself in the position I had been dreaming of for years: thrust over a man's knee, being soundly spanked for some concocted misdeed. (How much I liked those adverbs—"soundly," "firmly," "roundly," "thoroughly"—leading up to the most resonant verb I knew of in the English language.) The sheer tactile stimulation of it—the chastening sting—would have been enough to arouse me, but there was also, at last, the heady sense of emotional release: I was and was not a child; was and was not a sensual being; was and was not being reduced;

was and was not being forced into letting go; was and was not the one in control. I had fantasized about this event for so long that in the back of my mind there had always lurked the fear that its gratification would prove disappointing. I needn't have worried: the reality of spanking, at least initially, was as good as the dream.

I eventually married this man, after dillydallying for six years. By then, sex between us had lost some of its sheen, and somewhere along the way I had begun to tire of the spankings; I found them too hard, and then again not hard enough, to excite me. If, as I have come to think, mine was an addictive personality, kept in line by the tight parameters of my upbringing and by some exertion of will, then spankings were my drug of choice: they were meant to blunt the edges of my existence. But the edges kept springing back into sight again, resilient as weeds. I had veered in and out of depression since adolescence, and began to think that my depression was intimately linked to the whole spanking thing. (What I actually suspected was that I wanted to be spanked to death—transported out of my sorrow into a state of numbness, of permanent *un*feeling.) Then, too, I found that domesticity, with its dirty dishes and regular hours, didn't mesh particularly well with the role-playing agenda of erotic discipline, which required the sort of imaginative space that was compromised by the rut of daily life. A year after we married, I gave birth to a daughter; I was now a parent myself, attending to the needs of an imperious infant while fighting off freshly ignited feelings about the lack of mothering in my own childhood. The fantasy receded, its urgent claim on my imagination muted by the realization that I had to look toward the future, for my child's sake if not for my own.

AND then there it was again, the familiar urge come back to vex me. I had been separated from my husband for several years, and was on a first date with a man. We had talked a lot and sparred even more (my defenses were up, as they always were when I was attracted to someone), and, while I was looking in my study for something I wanted to show him, he said idly, "It seems to me that what you really need

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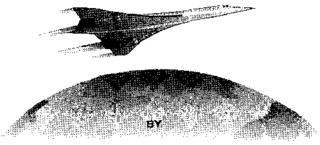

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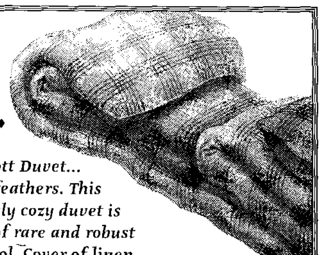

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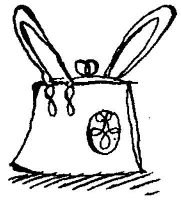
is a good spanking." Bingo. I continued to search through a file drawer, but inside I was lurching, drunk with excitement at being recognized. (I wondered what signal I gave off—a special pheromone that only certain men could smell?) The remark passed into the air, electrifying it. I was afraid to break the spell, afraid to respond to the comment, afraid to ignore it.



A day or two later, the man called me, and I referred to the comment by coy indirection. We played a guessing game—I told him that something he had said during the evening intrigued me, involving a word beginning with "s"—and I couldn't decide if he had genuinely forgotten or was feigning ignorance. (My embarrassment about the subject of spanking has never faded even slightly; I might as well have been back in my twenties with K., one of those overgrown schoolgirls asking for trouble.) In the days that followed, I could think of nothing else: at a perfume counter in Saks Fifth Avenue, I heard a passing comment by one saleswoman to another as "male bondage" when what she had actually said was "nail varnish"; I met a friend at a tearoom famous for its homemade jams and suddenly noticed, with a flush of delight, that the strawberry-and-apple preserves were called Rosy Cheeks. (The idea of blushing skin seems to me to be crucial to the fantasy of submission.) I would say my interest was comical, if it didn't feel so consuming, and, underneath it all, so sad—this fascination with having my bottom spanked, this willingness to suspend my hard-won adult identity for the pleasure of being disciplined by a man as part of foreplay.

In any case, I confided in him, and we quickly became involved in a fairly conventional romance that included some light S & M. What we were doing may have been moderate by hard-core standards, but there was some danger in it: our forays left me hungry for more radical sensations, and their tone began to permeate our relationship in disturbing ways. Some months into our affair, during a lengthy car ride to a country inn, I found myself engaging in a bizarre exchange. The man had been regaling me with his own initiation into bona-fide S & M, with a woman who liked to have her nipples "pulled" ("Pull them off!" she told him), and with whom he enacted baroque, carefully orchestrated dramas involving belts and riding crops and immobilization. He finally left her because she wanted to be mummified, which scared him. The disaffected manner in which he told the story threatened me, and when he was finished I launched—impulsively, a bit crazily—into a gothic tale of my own, in which I had purportedly been whipped and then left chained to a bed with only a tin can to relieve myself in. He questioned me closely about the details: Did I like it? Was I in a lot of pain? Did we, my demon lover and I, have sex? Anal sex? Threesomes? Were there other people watching us? (I'd noticed, with some unease, that voyeurism—the degrading of a woman in front of an audience—seemed to be of tireless interest to him.) Who *was* this man, he wanted to know. I paused—the fabrication had begun to run away with itself—and then claimed that he was someone I knew only tangentially, through book publishing. As we drove on for a minute or two in silence, my anxiety mounted; he seemed lost in thought and then, sounding aggrieved, remarked on my failure to tell him about this episode before. The truth was that I had wanted to admit the story was a lie even as I was concocting it, but I felt trapped in some inchoate, defiant need of my own. Our relationship had become a kind of competition—a bitter race, in which I found myself compelled to "top" him with my story. A little later, we stopped for dinner, and soon after we sat down I leaned over and confessed that I had made the whole thing up. He looked bewildered, and then angry. For a moment, I felt as though I had exposed him, made a mockery of this sordid little world of S & M.

But whom was I really exposing—him or myself? It occurred to me that underneath my own limited participation in this world I felt enormous resentment; I was following the steps in a dance I couldn't control. Spanking and its accoutrements may have helped to subdue my simmering rage toward men—as well as theirs toward me—but it also demonstrated how far I was from healthy intimacy, from the real give-

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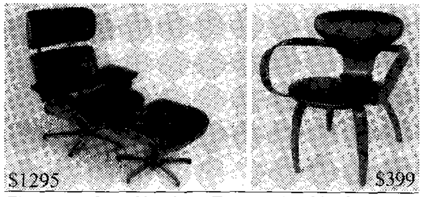

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and-take that makes a relationship viable. Besides, there was something innately troubling about such a hierarchical mode of interaction, with its partly parodic lexicon: "I'm not the bottom in this relationship," my companion retorted at one point, when I asked him to apologize for some perceived wrongdoing. The remark made me uncomfortable, and I realized that I was growing impatient with the confining grid of "top" and "bottom," with the tableau in which tenderness always had to be mediated by hostility. During our time together, the mechanism of my own compulsion had started to grate on me; in fact, it had started to bore me.

I have no doubt that there are people who are into S & M—or believe that they are into it, which comes to the same thing—for the sophisticated experimentation, the "gourmet sex" of it. I suppose, too, that sadomasochism can be dispassionately viewed as a heightened paradigm for the discrepancies in power and control which run in a more diffuse fashion through all human relations. One can class such behavior as pathological or, with greater poetic license and less clinical judgment, as part of the infinite human variety, but I have come to believe that for me it was about nothing less gripping than stating and restating, in an adult arena, the emotional conditions of my childhood, where accepting pain was the price of affection. I believed in a magic trick, an impossible reversal: if you chose of your own free will to let someone hurt you, then all past hurt would be wondrously undone.

"The desires of the heart," Auden observed, "are as crooked as corkscrews." I don't expect my own desires to ever straighten out completely, but I am beginning to see an opening in the maze—to see that I can rise to the occasion of erotic affection without first wrapping my arms around a punitive fantasy. ♦

THE LITERARY LIFE

[*From an interview with John Daly in Golf Digest*]

"I liked some of the classes some. I liked English. Algebra was a big challenge. History wasn't bad. But World Literature and all that crap? I could care less about what happened, all these fiction stories about what happened in the year 1500 or 1600. Half of 'em aren't even true."

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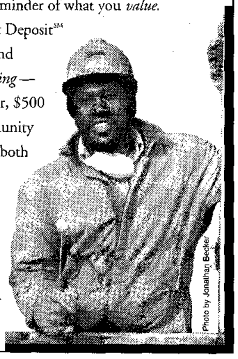

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A REPORTER AT LARGE

HATING HILLARY

Hillary Clinton has been trashed right and left—but what's really fuelling the furies?

BY HENRY LOUIS GATES, JR.

WE'RE sitting together at one end of a long mahogany table in the Map Room, on the ground level of the White House. A little awkwardly, the table is set up for twelve, with a White House notepad by each chair; it seems that nobody has been around to pick up since the President held a meeting here just before Christmas. Half a century ago, the American conduct of the Second World War was largely overseen from this room; here President Roosevelt could send messages to commanders around the world and receive up-to-the-minute reports from the battlefields. More recently, the once top-secret room had fallen into disuse; Hillary Rodham Clinton tells me that its restoration was one of her pet projects when she first arrived. A red damask sofa stands off to one side, and there are half a dozen pleasant, undemanding oils and engravings on the walls. But what draws your eye is a map of Europe, hand-labelled "Estimated German Situation," which was prepared and posted on April 3, 1945. Areas under Nazi occupation were outlined in red, with blue arrows to indicate invading enemy troops. It was the last situation map seen by President Roosevelt, who died nine days later.

All these years after, the map still lends an aura of the war room—of tactical maneuvers against desperate odds, of moves and countermoves. In the light of the First Lady's embattled position, it may also lend the comfort of control, the assurance that V-E Day is around the corner. You're almost tempted to stick different-colored pins in the thing, the way generals in old war movies mark enemy battalions: over here, a Senate panel and an independent counsel clustered together; over there, a *Times* columnist; and, in scattershot formation, a Fifth Column of disaffected ex-supporters. Maybe it isn't war, but it is hell. "I wouldn't wish this on *anybody*," she says. This morning's William Safire column happens to be the one that pronounces her a "congenital liar." She has just been out taking a long walk by herself—which, given the recent blizzard, shows real determination, or maybe need.

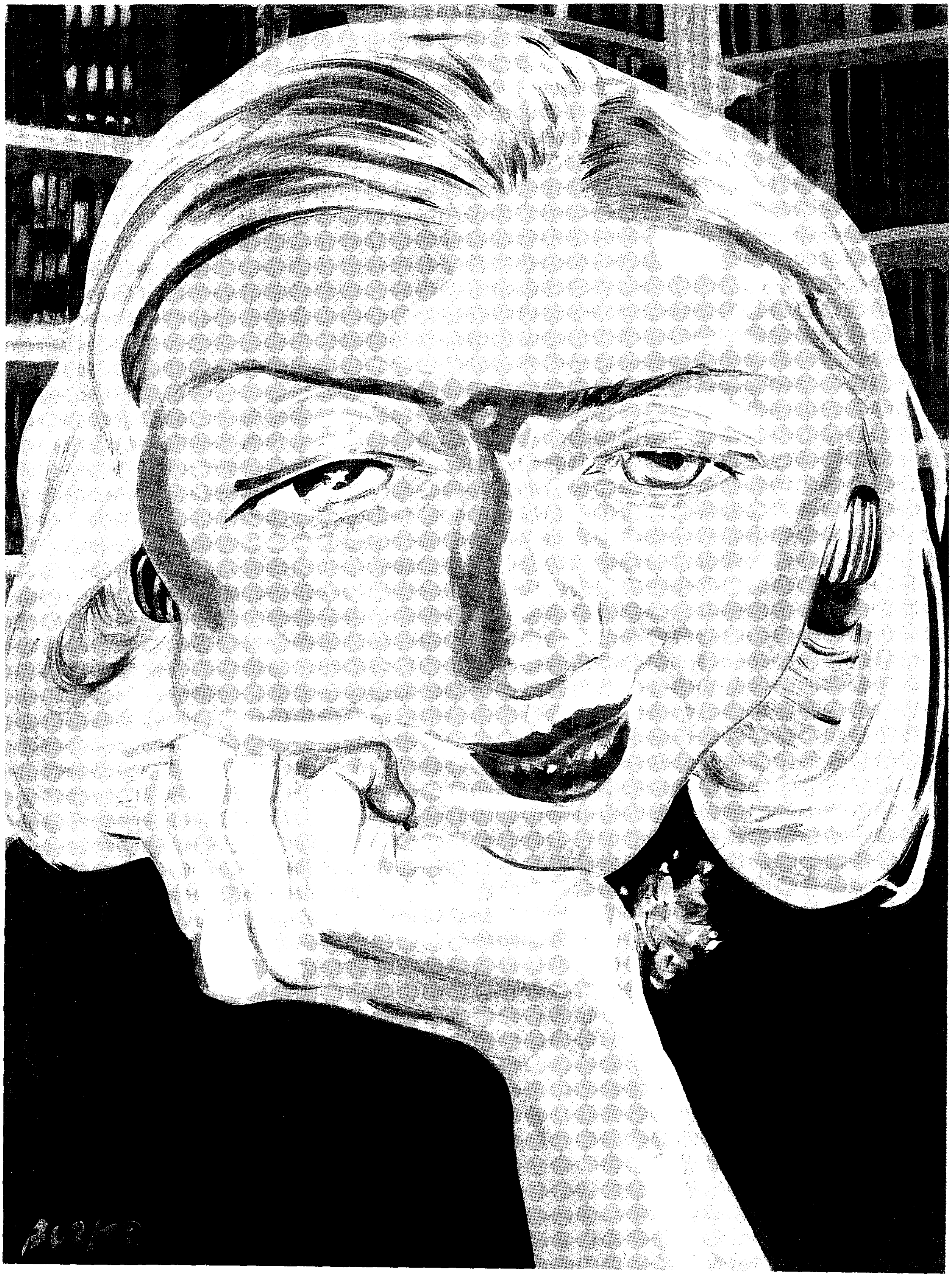
Actually, the strain isn't visible. With nearly flawless skin, she defies all logic by looking younger than she does in photographs. She's in what you might call her civvies: she's wearing a purple turtleneck and a blue St. John's knit suit ("It's great to travel in, you can crumple it, and it doesn't show wrinkles," she offers, in a hints-from-Heloïse spirit), and her hair is pulled back with a black velvet headband. I'm impressed by her equipoise. She explains that she's been trying to practice something called "the discipline of gratitude," and refers me to a book by a Jesuit priest, Henri Nouwen. "The discipline of gratitude," Father Nouwen wrote, "is the explicit effort to acknowledge that all I am and have is given to me as a gift of love, a gift to be celebrated with joy." She points to a bowl of pink roses on the table and says, "I mean, you look at those flowers and you think, My gosh, if my life were to end tomorrow, how lucky I've been that nearly all my life I've been surrounded by flowers." If you are Hillary Clinton, the discipline of gratitude means reminding yourself that you are not a Bangladeshi peasant foraging for grains of rice—you are the First Lady and there are fresh-cut flowers in every room of your house. As with any mental discipline, however, concentration sometimes wavers and the press of daily life intrudes. These days, what with one thing and another, Bangladesh may not be entirely without its attractions.

Earlier, I had asked Maggie Williams, who has spent the past three years as the First Lady's chief of staff, whether she would do it all over again, knowing what she knows now. It wasn't something she had to stop and think about. "Absolutely *not*," she replied, lolling her head. "Are you *kidding*?" I put the same question to Hillary Clinton, whose daily schedule now has to accommodate things like depositions with Kenneth Starr, the Independent counsel for the Whitewater investigation. "Absolutely," she says, and she speaks of the sense of adventure. "I wake up every day just wondering about what's going to happen next." She's not the only one.

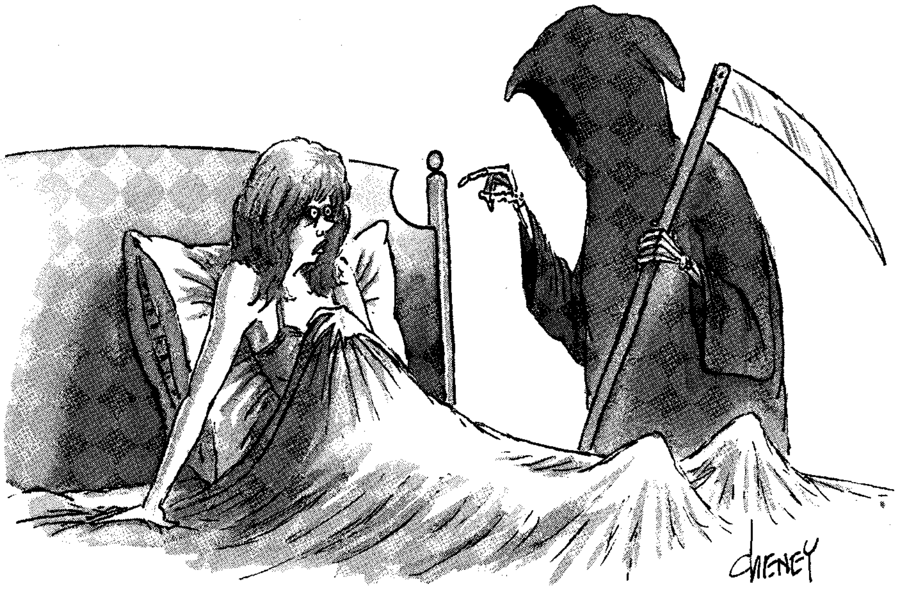
LIKE horse-racing, Hillary-hating has become one of those national pastimes which unite the élite and the lumpen. Serious accusations have, of course, been levelled against the President's wife, but it's usually what people think of her that determines the credence and the weight they give to the accusations, rather than the reverse. At times, she herself sounds at a loss to explain the level of animosity toward her. "I apparently remind some people of their mother-in-law or their boss, or something," she says. She laughs, but she isn't joking, exactly.

The remark chimes with something I've been told by the redoubtable Sally Quinn, who—in part because she's a frequent contributor to the Washington *Post*, in part because she's the wife of the *Post's* legendary editor Ben Bradlee—must herself count as a figure in the so-called Washington establishment. "There's this old joke about the farmer whose crops fail," she says. "One year, he's wiped out by a blizzard, and the next year there's a rainstorm, and the next year there's a drought, and so on every year. Finally, he's completely bankrupt—he's lost everything. He says, 'Why, Lord? Why, why me?' And the Lord says, 'I don't know. There's just something about you that pisses me off.' " She pauses, then says, "That's the problem—there's just something about her that pisses

PHILIP BURKE



You might say it takes a village to demonize a First Lady.



"Happy fortieth. I'll take the muscle tone in your upper arms, the girlish timbre of your voice, your amazing tolerance for caffeine, and your ability to digest French fries. The rest of you can stay."

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people off. This is the reaction that she elicits from people."

Well, from many people, anyway. "A lot of Americans are uncomfortable with her self-righteousness," Arianna Huffington says. "I think gratitude is great if you can communicate it, but if you have to keep telling people how grateful you are . . ." William Kristol, a Republican strategist and, since September, the editor and publisher of *The Weekly Standard,* puts it this way: "She strikes me as a sort of moralistic liberal who has a blind spot for actions that are in her own interest. These are exempt from that cold gaze that she casts over everyone else's less than perfect actions." On the whole, though, he's one of the more dispassionate voices you're likely to hear on the subject. Peggy Noonan, who came to prominence as a speechwriter for Presidents Ronald Reagan and George Bush, speaks of "an air of apple-cheeked certitude" that is "political in its nature and grating in its effects," of "an implicit insistence throughout her career that hers were the politics of moral decency and therefore those who opposed her politics were obviously of a lower moral order." She adds, "Now, with Whitewater going on, nonliberals are taking a certain satisfaction in thinking, Uh-huh, you were not my moral superior, Madam."

Some of this glee relates to a discomfort with Hillary's political identity. In the 1992 campaign, her husband presented himself as a different kind of Democrat. Many people who wanted a different kind of Democrat to be President fear that the President's wife is not a different kind of Democrat. (In Ben J. Wattenberg's "Values Matter Most"—the book that prompted Bill Clinton's infamous midnight-of-the-soul telephone call to the author—Hillary is identified as "a lady of the left" and compared with Mikhail Suslov, who was for years the Kremlin's chief ideologist.) Of course, if you ask *why* they fear she is not a different kind of Democrat, the answers are less than entirely satisfying. It's true that she served on the board of a liberal advocacy group, the Children's Defense Fund, but then many C.D.F. members regard the First Lady with heartfelt disappointment. It's also true that the Clinton health plan, which she spearheaded, involved significant government oversight, but then congressional conservatives routinely pass complicated bills in which government has a complicated role. (Consider, even, the tort-reform movement, which Vice-President Dan Quayle spearheaded, and which sought to vest the federal government with new powers to regulate product liability and other civil litigation.) But if you want to understand how conservatives perceive Mrs. Clinton these matters are ultimately a distraction. For they *recognize* her, almost on a gut level; in a phrase I've heard countless times, they "know the type." In a word, they look at Hillary Clinton and they see Mrs. Jellyby.

Mrs. Jellyby, you may recall, is the Dickens character in "Bleak House" who is as intent on improving humanity as she is cavalier toward actual human beings; thus she heartlessly neglects her own family while high-mindedly pursuing charity abroad—"telescopic philanthropy," in Dickens' classic phrase. Mrs. Jellyby is a pretty, diminutive woman in her forties with handsome eyes, Dickens writes, "though they had a curious habit of seeming to look a long way off." ("As if," he adds, "they could see nothing nearer than Africa!") And, in Mrs. Jellyby, Dickens' achievement was to have captured everything that people would come to detest about a certain strain of do-gooding liberal: the zealous reformer with a heart as big as all Antarctica. However much you may protest that you are not Mrs. Jellyby—however un-Jellybylike you in fact may be—once she has been attached to you by the adhesive of archetype, there is not much you can do to banish her.

In the sixties and seventies, neoconservatives liked to talk about the ascent of "the New Class," consisting of highly educated professionals who were, in Norman Podhoretz's words, "making a serious bid to dislodge and replace the business and commercial class which had on the whole dominated the country for nearly a century." Podhoretz ascribes to Irving Kristol (father of William) the insight that the New Class "represented itself as concerned only with the general good, the good of others (especially the poor and the blacks), but what it really wanted was to aggrandize its own power." As the only First Lady thus far to have come from its ranks, Hillary Clinton has suffered the fluctuating fortunes of the New Class itself. Among her peers, you'll hear, variously expressed, a very basic sentiment: finally, a First Lady who's *one of us.* "It was just as if we'd known each other all our lives," says Carly Simon, who has spent time at Martha's Vineyard with the First Lady; when Hillary admired a naïve Haitian painting in Simon's house, Simon made a present of it. "It was an easy, Ivy League kind of camaraderie. Like, 'You went to Wellesley? Oh, I went to Sarah Lawrence.' And, 'Oh, you like that kind of art? *I* like that kind of art.' " But if you do not feel part of that "us"—if, indeed, the very idea of Haitian folk art on the Vineyard makes you shift uneasily—you may feel the tug of an answering sentiment: that this First Lady is *one of them*. The writer and social activist Letty C. Pogrebin (who must herself count as New Class, if you see the world in such terms) was at a White House lunch on a day when the papers had carried a story about testimony given by a messenger at the Rose Law Firm. "And Hillary said, 'How could they believe a messenger and not me?' " Pogrebin recalls. "For me, that was such a real human reaction. It's like, 'I have a history here, I'm a hardworking, caring person, I've worked on behalf of good things and good causes, I'm a trained lawyer. How could your first assumption be that he's telling the truth and I'm lying?' Her reaction was such pure, authentic surprise. It says a lot about her." Well, yes, but if you ask *what* it says, you find yourself in the realm of Rorschach.

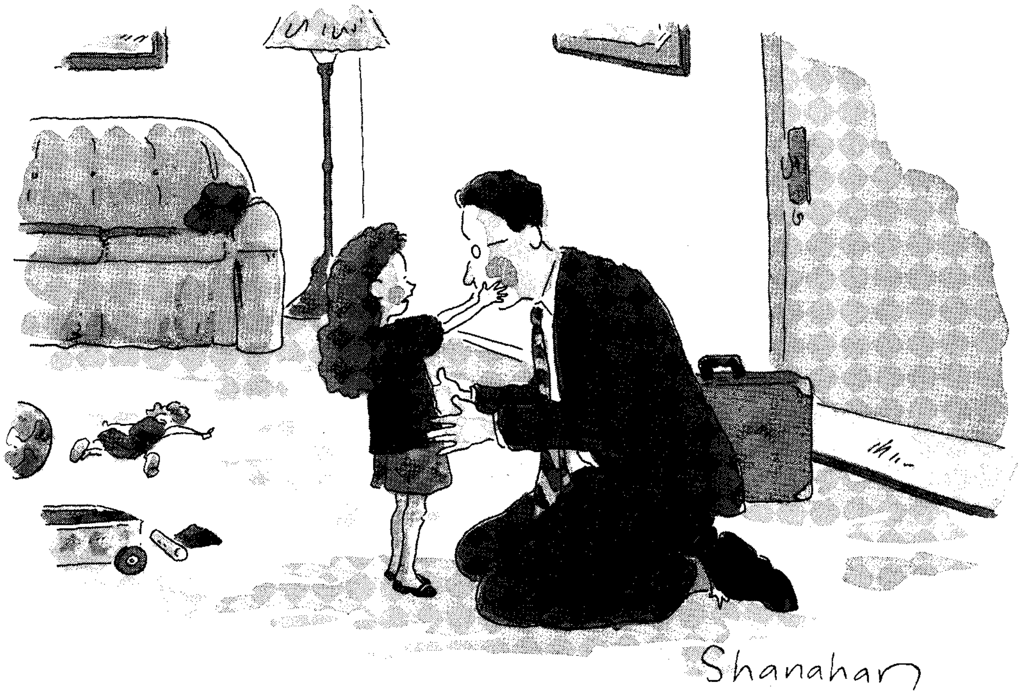
HILLARY CLINTON'S supporters have their own theories about the slings and arrows, many of which have to do with her role as a prominent working woman, and hence a symbol of feminism at a time when feminism is under siege. Gloria Steinem offers the canonical feminist explanation: "She and the President are presenting, at a very high, visible level, a new paradigm of a male-female relationship. And that is very much resented." Mandy Grunwald—a consultant who worked closely with the Clintons in 1992, as media director of the campaign—notes that women in politics often make other women uncomfortable: "They feel threatened—they're looking at a woman who is close to their age and has made totally different choices." Hillary, she says, "forces them to ask questions about themselves and the choices they've made that they don't necessarily want to ask."

Hillary herself identifies a cultural component of her difficulties. "I don't want to get grandiose," she says, "but I believe that we're going through a significant transition—economically, politically, culturally, socially, in gender relations, all kinds of ways—and so someone as visible as I am is going to get a lot of attention. I think if the spotlight were turned on many of my friends in their own private lives somebody could make out of it what they would: 'My goodness, she didn't take her husband's name,' or 'She's the one who travels while her husband stays home and takes care of the children,' or 'She has a very traditional role—does that mean that she's sold out her education?' There could be questions like that raised about nearly every American woman I know. It's just that I'm the one in the public eye right now, and so a lot of the issues that are being talked about around kitchen tables or office water coolers or in college classrooms get focussed on me."

Nothing goads her detractors more than the claim that her travails have anything to do with gender relations—"the 'strong woman' bogey," as one of them refers to it. "That's nonsense, that's old, it's not true, and it no longer applies," Peggy Noonan says, with her usual diffidence. "And for her to suggest that her problems stem from the fact that there are many Americans that just can't stand a strong woman is *infuriating* to people, because she's hiding behind charges of 'You are a sexist,' and they think she is trying to divert attention from the real problem, which is who she is and what she's doing." Sally Quinn, too, is impatient with such explanations: "I do not think that was an issue with the press, because half the people who are covering her are working women, and the other half are men whose wives work."

It's clear enough that many of Hillary's most severe critics, especially in the mainstream media, are women; it's less clear what to make of that fact. When I broach the subject with her, she says, vaguely, "Maybe it's something that has to do with the insecurity people feel about their own lives and the roles that they find themselves in and how that is changing." Ann Lewis, who was recently named deputy campaign manager and director of communications for Clinton/Gore '96, is more plainspoken. She sees it, basically, as a way for a woman reporter to prove she's one of the boys: "There are women in the business of communications who are striving very hard by what they think of as impartial standards, and they prove that by being as hard on women who run for political office as the guys. In your head, you think that the way to succeed is to win acceptance by that crowd, and those are their standards. But I have got to tell you, I have worked for a lot of women candidates and—guess what?—there is nothing impartial about those standards."

Speaking more generally, a close friend of the Clintons' brings up yet an-



"I love you, too, Daddy, but it just kills me that you're a man."

other theory: “The President thinks that they are treated so harshly because he is ‘white trash,’ as he puts it. The way somebody put it is, Imagine Washington as a country club, and Clinton as the golf pro. They think he’s perfectly competent at what he does, they think he is a good guy. You want him to have a drink at your table with you and your friends, and maybe even come to dinner. But the golf pro is never ‘one of us,’ never a real member.”

None of this lets the golf pro’s wife off the hook, of course. For the historical role of the First Lady has always involved the more delicate reaches of social diplomacy. And it’s in the practice of these exquisite arts that Mrs. Clinton is widely believed to have faltered. Mandy Grunwald, who during the two years following the election was an adviser to the White House, tells me of a sense of exhaustion after a bruising campaign requiring constant interaction with the media: on some level, she thinks, it was as if the Clintons “thought they could close the door.” They’re still living with that mistake. “There were people who covered the campaign who were ideologically sympathetic to the President, who were essentially the New Democrats of the press corps,” Grunwald says. “And they were not cultivated by the Clintons, and that was silly. Certainly there were people who could have been friends, who didn’t go to dinner, who could have and should have and wanted to, and who drew conclusions about having been cultivated and then essentially dropped after the campaign—drew conclusions about the Clintons’ sincerity which were unnecessary.”

“She hates the press, and that’s not smart,” a senior official in the Bush Administration tells me. “You can see the tightness around her mouth. That’s where you really see it. And in the eyes. Even when she’s smiling, you can see that tightness.” One consequence is that people who have met her socially always talk about how different she was from what they’d expected, in a way that people who met Barbara Bush, say, did not. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., had lunch with his friend Jacqueline Onassis on a day when he had been invited to have dinner at the White House. He mentioned to her that he’d never met Hillary and that he assumed she was very bright but also stern and humorless. “Jackie said, ‘Not at all—she’s great fun, she’s got an excellent sense of humor, and you’ll like her very much,’ ” Schlesinger recounts. “At the dinner, I found myself placed next to her and, indeed, Jackie was absolutely right. She’s a charmer.” What’s remarkable isn’t that she can be funny, spontaneous, and mischievous, and has a loud, throaty laugh; what’s remarkable is the extent to which she has sequestered her personality from the media.

Indeed, when it comes to handling the press Hillary Clinton sometimes seems to have a positive talent to annoy. Her troubled relationship with Sally Quinn, some argue, is itself a revealing example of diplomatic failure: the wages of well-meant counsel spurned. “I have watched First Ladies for thirty years, and it just seemed to me that Hillary could be potentially very damaging to him if she went about things in the wrong way,” Quinn tells me. “And so I literally said, ‘Here is what I have learned over the years from observing First Ladies and here are some mistakes not to make.’ ” Today, Quinn’s coolness toward Mrs. Clinton is a popular topic of Beltway conversation. A longtime friend of both women puts it this way: “It’s like the blond girl in the class—you don’t even know why you hate her.” Whatever the roots of Quinn’s disaffection, her assessments of both the Clintons do tend to be unsparing. “I just think that, time after time after time, they have responded to things with no class,” she offers tartly. “It would appear that there is sometimes a certain lack of loyalty.”

The list of Clinton friends and supporters who now feel abandoned is a long one. Lani Guinier wrote mordantly in the *Times Magazine* about encountering Hillary in the West Wing at a time when her nomination to head the civil-rights division of the Justice Department was beginning to look doomed: Hillary, whom she’d known since law school, had breezed by with a casual “Hi, kiddo,” announcing that she was late for lunch. Then, there is the tale of Michael Lerner, who is the editor of the magazine *Tikkun* and the inventor of the “politics of meaning,” which seeks to meld progressive politics with spiritual values. That was a phrase, and an idea, that the First Lady started to introduce into her speeches shortly after she arrived in Washington. Lerner met her at the White House in April of 1993, at a ceremony for the opening of the Holocaust Memorial Museum. “And when she was introduced to me,” he recounts, “her first words were ‘Am I your mouthpiece, or what?’ I said, ‘Well, we seem to be talking a similar language,’ and she said, ‘Well, we are completely on the same wavelength.’ And ‘When can we get together and talk?’ ” As he goes on, he sounds like a wounded soldier reliving a combat experience. When the two did get together at the White House, Lerner says, Hillary made a point of explaining that the so-called politics of meaning wasn’t anything he had introduced her to—that it was really just a way of talking about the things she had learned as a Methodist when she was growing up. “And I said to her, ‘Absolutely right—this is an attempt to speak Biblical values in a nonreligious language,’ ” he recalls. “And she said, ‘Yeah, that is why I love it.’ So I have no sense of exaggerating my importance or anything like this. I was giving her permission, in a way—the politics of meaning gave her a vehicle through which to say things that she already believed.”

Their intellectual comity did not last. Some people point to letters that Lerner sent to a small group of *Tikkun* supporters, sprinkled with turns of phrase like “Hillary and I believe . . .” It was a presumption that the White House couldn’t be expected to warm to, and especially not in the light of several caustic articles that portrayed him as her guru—alternately Svengali and Rasputin. Lerner thinks the attack was led by people whose allegiance was really to Vice-President Al Gore and who were unhappy that Hillary was playing the role in shaping domestic policy that they’d sought for Gore. “They wanted Hillary’s influence to decrease and Gore’s to increase, and thus *theirs* to increase, because they were coming into the White House through Gore,” he says. What really incensed Lerner, though, was her response to the bad press: “The second she was attacked, she backed completely away.” The final straw came when Hillary, in a later effort to dissociate herself from him, referred in print to his cherished White House meeting as a mere “courtesy call.” “So here is Safire saying this woman is a ‘congenital liar,’ ” Lerner adds, sounding not at all displeased by it. “I am sure glad he didn’t know about all these things, because he might have been able to use them to bolster his case."

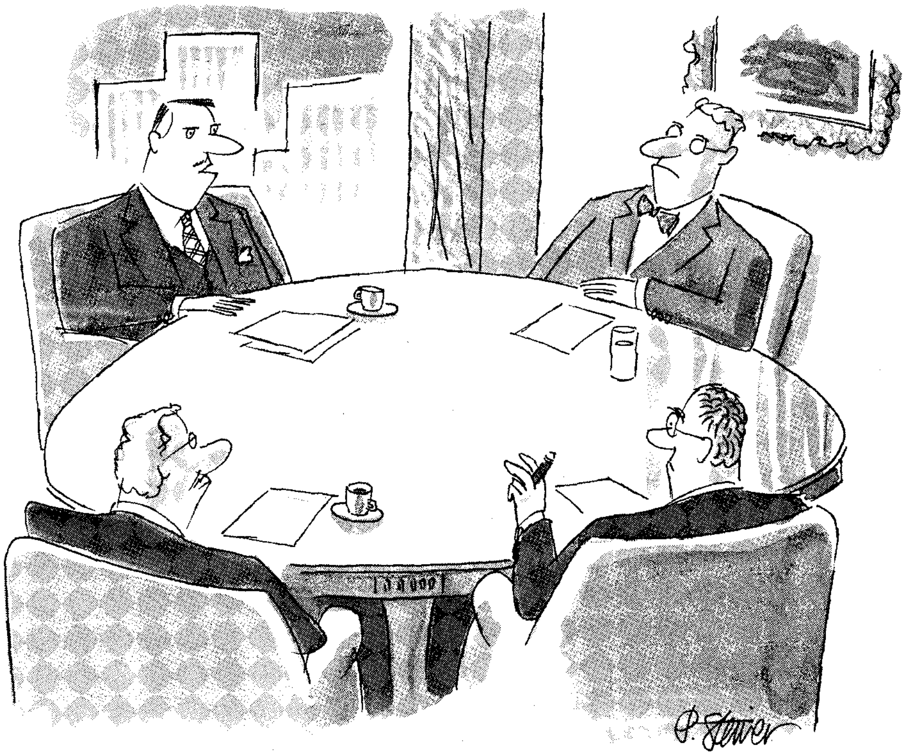
THE truth is that the bristly Michael Lerner was not cut out to be a Camelot companion. And plenty of others now departed from the charmed circle have themselves to blame. But the traditional standard of politesse involves never giving offense *intentionally*, and Hillary hasn't always met it. Indeed, it's become a Washington commonplace that when Mrs. Clinton arrived in the White House she failed to understand that being the First Lady was itself a job. Marilyn Quayle says, "It was a basic misunderstanding of the power and importance you can have in what some might call a traditional role of First Lady—a lack of understanding that this wasn't just cutting ribbons. My presumption is that she was given advice or pushed by feminists to the point where the traditional role of First Lady was denigrated." But, even to the most apt pupil, the culture of Washington—and, indeed, of the White House—can be daunting. Susan Porter Rose, who was the director of scheduling for Mrs. Nixon and Mrs. Ford and the chief of staff for Mrs. Bush, is a savant on the subject, and she addresses the question with Jeeves-like discretion. "The place has its own sociology, and it's filled with banana peels and land mines," Porter Rose says. Another member of the Bush Administration talks about the shortage of "seeing-eye dogs" on the Clintons' staff and goes on, "You have to remember that, in Washington, real estate and titles are everything. They are how you draw distinctions—one of the few ways, really. They *serve notice*. Mrs. Bush came in with one commissioned officer. Mrs. Clinton, on the other hand, came in with three—Maggie and two others. What this means is this: Going in, she told the world, 'This is a new day.' Not everyone was pleased." And Jan Piercy, an old friend of Hillary's from Wellesley who now sits on the board of the World Bank, hints, "There was also a kind of resistance in parts of the White House itself, a sort of ambivalence about Hillary's role."

When it comes to the subject of social diplomacy—to her performance in the "charm offensive," the tablecloth front—Hillary offers only a partial defense of her record. "Part of the urgency that my husband felt about the agenda he brought with him to Washington made all of us rush in and try to do things before we really understood how Washington worked," she says. "It's one thing to stand outside, as we did, and to look at it and to criticize it, but there really *is* a culture here, and it is something that I certainly did not understand, and would have spent more time trying to understand, and would have tried to figure out better how to do what I wanted to do." Now, she says, "I would have gone at it differently. I would not have made some of the mistakes that I think we made, that got us on the wrong side of some of the perceptions from the very beginning." Still, Hillary clearly thinks that this culture has a lot to answer for, too. "I suddenly came to a place where perception is more important than it had ever been in my life—where I was being, I thought, painted in ways based almost on tea-leaf reading," she says. "But I finally realized that this was serious business for the people who cover politics in this town and think about it, and so I had to pay at least some attention."

Certainly I've met Washingtonians who wonder whether Hillary the New Woman hasn't shortchanged Hillary the hostess. She's slightly nettled by the idea, and invokes the priorities of a mother. "I regret, for example, that I haven't had as much time to socialize or spend with friends. I don't get out a lot in Washington and I didn't get out a lot in Little Rock, because when I have time that is not spent on my work and my public activities I want to be with my family. I think *that's* one of the reasons people say, 'Well, who is she? We don't know her.' I don't get out as much as many people do, because these years of child rearing go by so fast—I mean, Chelsea's going to be gone. I can go to dinner parties from now to kingdom come when she's in college and when she's grown up." She sounds philosophical. "You know, you pay a price no matter what decision you make."

As a working mother in the White House, Hillary says, "it has been very hard, because there wasn't any blueprint. I really didn't know what to do or what was expected. I really did feel that I was pretty much having to make it up as I went along. I made lots of mistakes. But by and large I think it was a necessary 'learning experience'—at least, for me." She laughs at the euphemism. "I think for the country, too—we still seem to be learning together."

At the same time, she maintains that if she has come up short in the charm



"Anyone here not a feminist?"

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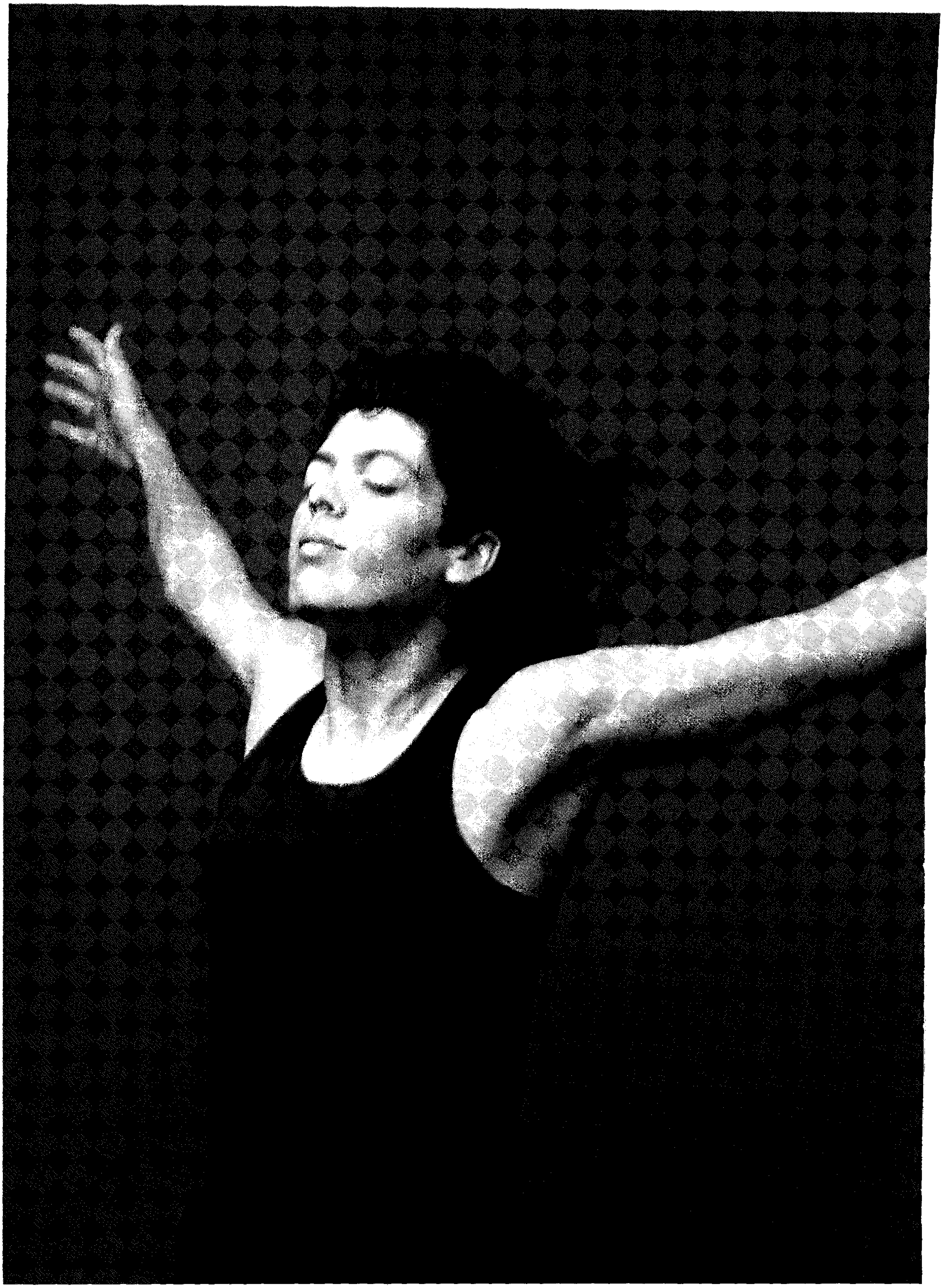

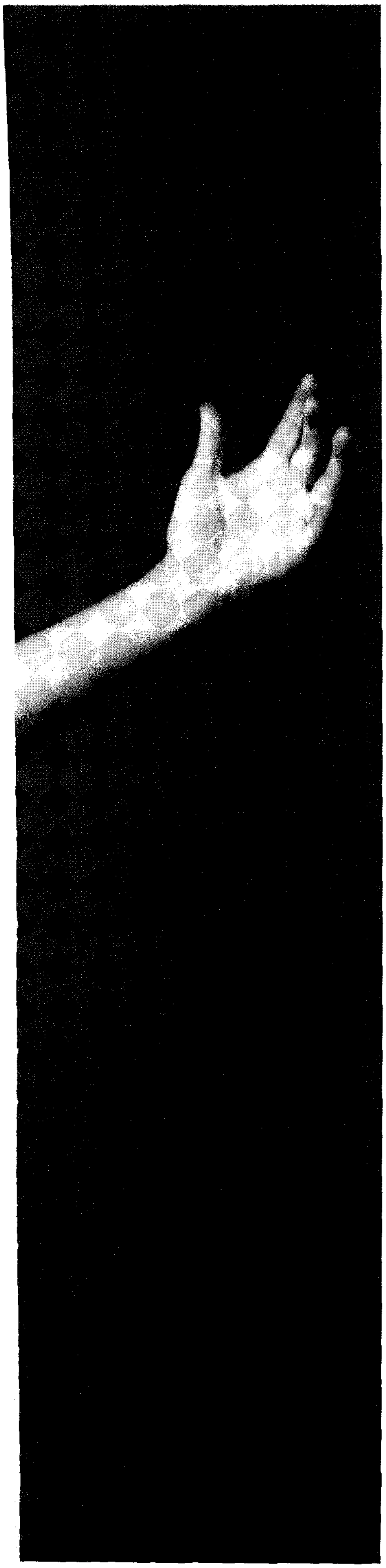

SHOWCASE

RUNNING FREE

THAT excellence equals beauty was taken for granted by the Greeks, fathers of the Olympiad, and Hassiba Boulmerka embodies the equation's power. Arms splayed, head back, eyes closed, the Algerian woman bursts the tape, reënacting, perhaps, her triumph at Barcelona in 1992, or, more likely, dreaming of the touch of Atlanta's track: she is the world's greatest at fifteen hundred metres, and the presumptive favorite at the next Olympics.

Breaking the tape in Tokyo in 1991, her first world title, she buried both hands in her hair, opened her mouth wide, and screamed, and went on screaming—"For joy and for shock," she said later, "for Algeria's pride and Algeria's history," and, finally, "for every Algerian woman, every Arabic woman." In a country racked by a savage civil war between a corrupt, long-entrenched authoritarian state and a rising fundamentalist movement, Boulmerka—insist though she would that she preferred "to talk about athletics rather than politics"—instantly became everyone's symbol: the then President had kissed her publicly on the forehead, while the imams, not impressed with the baggy boys' shorts she had worn even as her competitors availed themselves of Lycra, denounced her for "running with naked legs in front of thousands of men."

In Algeria, these are complicated and bloody matters, near the heart of an intricate cultural war that has claimed the lives of tens of thousands, including hundreds of women attacked because of their Western dress. For a woman who, barelegged, had risen to become the world's most famous Algerian, there could be no neutral stance, and before last fall's elections Boulmerka stood publicly to support the country's ruler. She trains mostly abroad now, but in Atlanta this summer, "running with naked legs," she will remain an inescapable political symbol. Reverence may demand beauty be covered, but here excellence demands it be revealed. The Greeks would have well understood. —Mark Danner

Hassiba Boulmerka, photographed in Cuba by Annie Leibovitz.

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offensive it hasn't been for lack of trying. "I've *tried* to do all those things—we've tried very hard to be as hospitable as we can, we've entertained more people than anybody has ever entertained in the White House before." She shakes her head. "I think if there were something that I would do differently it would be to try earlier than I have to rezone my sense of privacy, so that I could give people a broader view of who I am and what I do." Part of the trouble, though, is that who she is and what she does is itself hopelessly ill-defined—not so much divided as multiple.

She often refers to the book "Composing a Life," by the anthropologist Mary Catherine Bateson, who is the daughter of Gregory Bateson and Margaret Mead. Reading it, I'm struck by a passage that must have had particular resonance for Hillary. "There has been a tendency to look ahead to some sort of utopia in which women will no longer be torn by the conflicting claims and desires that so often turn their pathways into zigzags or, at best, spirals," Bateson writes. "It would be easier to live with a greater clarity of ambition, to follow goals that beckon toward a single upward progression. But perhaps what women have to offer in the world today, in which men and women both must learn to deal with new orders of complexity and rapid change, lies in the very rejection of forced choices: work or home, strength or vulnerability, caring or competition, trust or questioning. Truth may not be so simple."

Now Hillary Clinton has published a book of her own, "It Takes a Village," that is all about parenting and politics, but, though Chelsea makes an appearance in its pages, Hillary has been resolute about shielding her daughter from the glare of public politics. Mandy Grunwald, the media consultant, tells me of an inspiration she had for the 1992 Democratic National Convention. After the presentation of the short film "The Man from Hope," Clinton's campaign biography in documentary form, the hall would go completely dark. Then, out of the darkness, there would be a single spotlight on Chelsea, who would say, "I want to introduce the next President of the United States—my dad, Bill Clinton."

It had everything: not only drama but also, implicitly, an affirmation of family values. It would remind viewers at home that, whatever else he might be, this man was somebody's *daddy*. The crowd at Madison Square Garden would go wild. Home viewers, already softened up by an inspirational biopic, would get just a little misty. It was a surefire, time-tested device, a perfect realization of the lump-in-the-throat magic of political theatre: *And a little child will lead them*. Mandy Grunwald explained her brainstorm to Chelsea's mother, who got it at once, and didn't hesitate to deliver her verdict. "Absolutely not," Hillary said. "I would *never* put my daughter in that position."

"And I felt horrible, crass, manipulative—everything people think of political consultants," Mandy Grunwald tells me. "Bad politics, good parenting" is how she describes the trade-off.

If you're as serious about it as Mrs. Clinton, being a mother, especially in the White House, demands a lot of time and energy. ("I wish Africa was dead!" Mrs. Jellyby's poor daughter is finally moved to exclaim.) But then so does being a wife. Can you really be both policy wonk and helpmeet? Barbara Bush says, "I had to have priorities, and my priorities were things in the private sector." By that, she means providing her husband with the sanctuary of a real home and also serving as her husband's sounding board and confidante: "safe" is the word she uses. "I think every person, man or woman, needs someone who is a safe person to talk to," she says. "In order to get that trust, you have to be safe, and I think I was that for George Bush." If all this sounds, to modern tastes, a bit *Kinder, Kirche, Küche*, you can argue that the role isn't gender-specific. Washington, Noonan reminds me, "is increasingly full of *women* who are in power and important, and married to *men* who are tough critics and advisers. It is wrong to think that this is necessarily a sexist setup."

And, while Hillary may not be "safe," in Mrs. Bush's sense of a neutral, nonpartisan sounding board, few doubt the intimacy of the Clintons' political relationship. "She is the intellectual half—the person he can always bounce ideas off," Ann Lewis says. Actually, I saw something of this dynamic last month, at a dinner where President Clinton was soliciting themes and ideas from a group of academics, mostly political theorists. You could tell when something was said that he took to be valuable, because he'd make eye contact with Hillary and nod, as if to say: make a note, let's discuss it afterward.

Maggie Williams puts it this way: "I used to think that she would be a great President, before I took this job, and she's certainly *smart* enough to run the country. But Hillary's intelligence is specific and concrete—she's task-oriented, she's a great problem solver. The President, on the other hand, is vision-oriented—he's obsessed with the grand design. They depend upon each other."

A onetime friend of theirs from law school says, "She and the President have a private arrangement that is based on power sharing—she is his equal and he acknowledges it. But they realized that the American people weren't ready for that, and so they are trying to do it without telling people. And that is what is creating this sense that they are hiding something." Williams, for her part, emphasizes the simple fact of companionship: "He doesn't have a Haldeman. Leon Panetta is doing a brilliant job, but I don't believe they are close like Nixon and Haldeman were close. I think it's difficult for the President to have friends the way we have friends. He has a *best* friend, though, and that best friend is Hillary."

Of course, the nature of the Clintons' personal relationship has itself long been the subject of scrutiny and conjecture, some of it uncharitable. One fixture of the Washington scene says, "She was the one who was always right and always superior—he was the fuckup," and argues that Hillary's troubles have marked a change in the dynamic: "When Bill Clinton came out to make a comment at that press conference about Bill Safire, he looked like a happy man. He didn't look mad. He was really thrilled: 'My wife's screwing up again and I get to be the good guy, I get to be the morally superior one in this relationship.'"

The view is different from inside. People who have spent a lot of time around the two speak of moments both of tension and of tenderness. Maggie Williams admits, "Sometimes I'm embarrassed to be in the same room with them. They are very affectionate with each other. Sometimes the President will call different members of her staff throughout the day and ask, 'How's my girl? How's my girl doing?'"

A former close associate of theirs tells me, "All her friends are going to work in New York and Washington law firms, she's a hot-shot lawyer, she goes to Arkansas? There is one, and only one, reason for it: she's crazy-ass in love with him—and it is still true. And, if you see them together, you know. She gets that goofy look on her face. She lights up around him. It's the thing people don't understand about her at all—they just don't see that side." I've noticed it, too. Hillary reminds me of the girl in high school who was brainy and pretty, friends with the cheerleaders but not one herself; the nerds all admired her, but she was into the jocks. In Bill Clinton, Hillary found a big, lumbering guy who happened to be an intellectual equal. One law-school friend talks of it as "a magic combination."

But if Mrs. Clinton were simply the President's private counsellor and public hostess she would not have become the lightning rod she is. The fact remains that the First Lady's greatest reversal of fortune occurred not in the realm of the salad fork and the demitasse but in the rough-and-tumble of the political arena, where the Administration's health-care plan met its demise. If Hillary Clinton is a wife and a mother, she is also a working woman, with an office suite in the Old Executive Office Building. To pay a visit there is to be reminded that Mrs. Clinton is a professional—a fact that has proved both her greatest asset and her greatest liability.

In Hillary's offices—Suite 100 on the first floor of the O.E.O.B.—an item evidently clipped from the personal ads has been blown up, mounted, and hung on the wall:

> HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON TYPE SOUGHT by single Jewish attorney, 31, who is bright, witty, sincere, and cute. There's nothing sexier than an intelligent, powerful, and successful female who knows what she wants.

It's a clue to the ethos of the place. Fifteen of the sixteen people who work for Hillary are women, and, despite the sixteen-foot ceilings, there's an almost dorm-room air of camaraderie in Suite 100. Both on and off the record, members of

Hillary's staff are quick to acknowledge it; many have their own theories about the merits of what they view as a female managerial style.

Earlier, I had breakfast with Maggie Williams, at the Hay-Adams Hotel: she had her hair in a great rope coiled around her head, like a Yoruba headdress, and was wearing a blue turtleneck, sweatpants, and black snow boots. "She allows you to be a woman in the modern way but also in the traditional way," Williams told me. "Like my mother always says, there is just something basically different between women and men. She's the one who'll lend you jewelry for that special date." Another woman close to Hillary says, "Hillary's the sort of friend who'd undo an extra button on your blouse when you are about to go on a date. She wants to know who you're going out with." Ideally, a single Jewish attorney, thirty-one, who is bright, witty, sincere, and cute.

"She's a real girl," Mandy Grunwald says. "There's a part of her that is constantly commenting on whether you got your hair cut, how it looks, your clothes." And sometimes she plays Emma Woodhouse. Grunwald recounts, "Hillary and I were talking about a man I knew who worked for the Senate, and she said, 'He's really good-looking. Does he go out with anyone?' And I told her that he did. She said she was disappointed, because she was thinking about him for one of the single women on her staff. She was matchmaking."

"Hillary's approach is closer to circle or matrix management than to hierarchical management," Ann Lewis, who has been walking me through the cluttered O.E.O.B. suite, says. "Women have a different management style. You encourage people to sit around the table and contribute—and she will do that. She will sit around the table, too, and listen and take suggestions from people and give suggestions back." And while Hillary's staff is known to be fiercely loyal, Maggie Williams suggests that this, too, may be a sex-linked trait: "I think women *tend* to be loyal. I just think we work differently; I think we're more task-oriented, more coöperative. And she's a big delegator. I mean, she's got people that she trusts. *Not* that we're a bunch of lemmings." It's a phrase she has used before. Williams has been threatened by Senator Alfonse D'Amato, who is chairman of the Senate Whitewater Committee, with perjury charges; one witness told the Senate panel that shortly after Vincent Foster's death Williams had removed folders from his office, and she testified that she hadn't. So when she says she isn't a "lemming" she means that, all loyalty aside, she isn't someone who would perjure herself to protect her boss. (Amid her own recent travails, Williams, too, has been trying to practice the discipline of gratitude. She explains, "I try and be grateful for the fact that there is an Al D'Amato. Having him at such a distinct extreme from everything that I am or want to be or that my people are—that brings a certain peace to me when I see him.")

The Hillary Clinton that Williams describes is more den mother than martinet. "We all have our disagreements with Hillary, on policy and on procedure and all kinds of things," she says. "And you *can* disagree with her." Williams previously worked with Marian Wright Edelman at the Children's Defense Fund, and remains devoted to her, despite a certain *froideur* between the Edelmans and the Clintons these days. Still, she finds the contrast in executive styles to be instructive. "Marian tends to know how she wants to solve a problem—she's very fixed on it," Williams says. "Hillary wants the opposition view, always, because she might even adopt some of it. She can be *convinced.* She can be convinced even when it comes to things she thinks she knows everything about."

So Williams' experience does seem to complicate Hillary's bad-cop reputation. "The interesting thing is that people need to box her and have her be one way for all time," Williams says. "But the idea that she is the enforcer is based on, one, her having concerns about things, two, speaking her mind, three, having people call and ask her opinion about things. Now, I think that Harold Ickes— I mean, who would mess around with Harold Ickes? I think that people are more afraid of Harold than they are of Hillary."

Besides, would Harold Ickes, a deputy White House chief of staff, ever help you

"First we had couples therapy, then we had you."

preen for a date? I'm struck, somehow, by that detail about the unbuttoned blouse. It's an image of Hillary, I realize, that runs counter to many of the stereotypes people have of her—and, sadly, to many of the stereotypes people have of feminists in general. Understandably, the true nature of feminism is a subject that both Hillary and most of her associates have strong feelings about. Ann Lewis says to me, with some indignation, "To this day, I read articles by women who say, 'I've always stayed home and taken care of my family, and I don't like to be put down by the women's movement.' And I think, Hey, *I'm* the women's movement. It would never occur to me to put down a woman who takes care of a family. I spent years of my life at home with children. That's hard work." And Maggie Williams says, "This is about choice, isn't it? Let's face it—when white feminists were talking about getting jobs and being in the workplace and coming out of the home, my mother was saying, 'God, I wish I could stay home.' Maybe this is the maturity of both the country and its movements, but they should be about *choice*." Hillary herself tells me of a phrase she picked up when she was in Belfast, meeting with women who had been working to unite people across the religious divide. "One of the women said she considered herself a 'family feminist.' I loved that phrase, because I believe that, if you are a human being, one of your highest responsibilities is to the next generation. I mean, I have fought all my life for women to have the right to make the decisions that are best for them, and for me that included getting married, having a child."

Yet Hillary is, demographically speaking, a white upper-middle-class female baby boomer, which is to say that feminism has carved out the very contours of her life. For feminists, moreover, the sixties and seventies were a time of laying tracks, not coasting down the rails. Or so she quickly came to recognize. We're talking about Yale Law School, where she got her law degree, and where I was briefly enrolled not long afterward. "When I went to take the law-school admissions test, I went with a friend of mine from Wellesley," she recalls. "We had to go in to Harvard to take the test, and we were in a huge room, and there were very few women there, and we sat at these desks waiting for the proctors or whoever to come and all the young men around us started to harass us. They started to say, 'What do you think you're doing? If you get into law school, you're going to take my position. You've got no right to do this. Why don't you go home and get married?' " She sits up very straight. "I got into Harvard and I got into Yale, and actually I went to a cocktail reception at the Harvard Law School with a young man who was, I think, a second-year Harvard Law student. And he introduced me to one of the legendary Harvard Law professors by saying, 'Professor So-and-So, this is Hillary Rodham. She's trying to decide between us and our nearest competitor.' And this man, with his three-piece suit and his bow tie, looked at me and said, 'First of all, we have no nearest competitor, and, secondly, we don't need any more women.' And that's how I decided to go to Yale."

In the early seventies, Yale Law School was itself no enclave of feminist enlightenment. In those days, for instance, the law-school film society was famous all over the campus for its soft-porn evenings, and though I never made it to the screenings myself, I somehow can't imagine the law school playing host to an event like that today. I remind her of that bygone porn festival, since it might be taken as at least one measure of a changing social climate.

"*I* never went," the First Lady says, straight-faced. "You and Clarence Thomas must have gone." I'm just about to protest when she starts laughing.

"Thank goodness you're here. His dish is empty."

THERE'S a small shelf of books in Suite 100 of the O.E.O.B. where you'll find some titles that are almost comically appropriate: "Public Like a Frog," by Jean Houston; "The Pursuit of Love & Love in a Cold Climate," by Nancy Mitford; "The Norton Book of Women's Lives," edited by Phyllis Rose; "All That She Can Be," by Carol J. Eagle and Carol Colman; and "First Ladies," by Margaret B. Klapthor. Just two books—

"The Logic of Health-Care Reform," by Paul Starr, and "Making Managed Healthcare Work," by Peter Boland—betray what was the all-consuming project of Hillary's first year in Washington. Her plan for health-care reform began as triumph and ended as ignominy; and, like investigators at the scene of a high-tech disaster, political analysts are still trying to sort through the wreckage.

These days, when Hillary refers to the health-plan debacle she speaks of the missteps she made. Indeed, for someone often accused of being obnoxiously self-certain ("She has not once said, 'I made a mistake,' there's never a sense of her being a fallible human being," Arianna Huffington maintains), she can sound practically Chinese in her self-criticism. "Certainly here in Washington one of the big mistakes was going along with the recommendation that we shouldn't brief reporters even off the record, in part because there was a legitimate concern, from both people in Congress and here in the Administration, that trying to put together a health-care plan to meet our original date, which was May 1st, was a huge undertaking. Everybody felt that was going to be hard under even the best of circumstances, and they worried that talking about it as we went along would create all kinds of false expectations or misunderstandings. But I think in retrospect that was the wrong call—we should have gone ahead and risked whatever problems might have come from that, in favor of having a much more open relationship with the press from the very beginning. You know, you follow the advice you get, trying to make sense of it, but when you're in a new environment, as we were, you don't really know the players and you don't understand the history and the nuance."

Some fault the complexity of the proposal, which made it hard to represent to voters and easy to misrepresent to them. Ironically, its complexity was a result of its essential conservatism: the constraint of leaving intact, as much as possible, preëxisting structures of health care and insurance. Others blame not the plan itself but the way it was created: out of the head of Zeus, so it seemed, rather than the loins of the legislature. Even Brooke Shearer, who was Hillary Clinton's aide during the 1992 campaign and now directs the White House Fellows program, points to a certain neglect of political courtship: "I think that, when you do something as large as that, you would probably want to try and speak to individual constituencies first to get their support." Less sympathetic voices portray Hillary Clinton as having sabotaged it through her own crusading intransigence.

In truth, had the Administration done nothing other than win the fight for universal, or near-universal, health coverage—no matter how it calibrated the mechanisms of employer mandates, business alliances, managed competition, and spending caps—it could have rested on its laurels. That one measure would have gone some distance toward addressing the other high-profile items on the Clinton agenda—reducing the deficit and reforming welfare. (Bringing medical spending under control would have made it easier to arrive at a balanced budget in the foreseeable future. And research had shown that for many welfare recipients a major barrier to employment is the forfeiture of medical coverage, which they would otherwise not be able to afford.) By the same token, Republican strategists swiftly figured out that passage of the Clinton plan, however modified, might have devastating electoral consequences: as William Kristol wrote in an influential memo, the plan would "strike a punishing blow against Republican claims to defend the middle-class by restraining government." A receptive atmosphere quickly soured as Republicans scrambled to enlist the firepower of business interests, some of which had earlier been sympathetic to reform. "In an odd role reversal," the political journalist E. J. Dionne, Jr., observes, "conservative Republican leaders *lobbied* the business *lobbyists*." The rest is an unedifying chapter in the history of negative advertising.

Both Hillary Clinton and her detractors are correct in pointing to mistakes she made—in the planning phase at the O.E.O.B. and in the lobbying phase on the Hill. Yet so nearly perfect an alignment of partisan and industry interests is hard to defeat in the best of circumstances; and to view the outcome as a referendum on Hillary's character is to indulge either vanity or spite. "Every President who has touched it has got burned in one way or the other because the interests involved are so powerful," Hillary points out.

Maggie Williams is blunter. "Any time you start down the road of messing with people's money, they have to kill you," she says. What she's talking about is, among other things, character assassination. In her view, the failure was in no small part related to the politics of perception: "First of all, health care defined her instead of her coming out and defining who she was." What *should* they have done? "I probably would have done three or four months of people just getting to know her, who she was, people getting a sense of her and her complexities."

William Kristol—who has been variously praised and deplored as the man who did more than anyone else to derail the proposal—believes that Hillary "actually helped get their health-care plan off to a stronger start than it might have had if it had just been championed by some Cabinet Secretary." In his view, "she has gotten an easier ride than she deserved as the Administration's main spokesman on health care—at least, for the first few months." Ironically, Kristol's remarks dovetail with something Ira Magaziner—who worked closely with Hillary on the health-care plan and shared much of the public blame for its failure—tells me about those first few months. "She impressed the heck out of everybody, and you could see alarm bells going off all over town, in terms of the opponents of this plan saying that as long as her popularity remains that high and she is that impressive, we're not going to beat it," he says. "All sorts of stories began to get back to us about meetings among the opposition about how to discredit her. And the Whitewater thing and the commodities thing and so on were, in part, the means that were used."

If a year of intensive research, legislative draftsmanship, and political lobbying failed to result in health-care reform, it did much to promulgate the so-called Hillary problem. William Kristol says, "There is a problem with asking your wife—who has not been elected, who has not been selected for the staff, can't be fired, hasn't been confirmed—to take charge of a huge policy area. I think that hurt in some way it is hard to put one's finger on." He adds, "It was too monarchical—it was like the Queen gets to do stuff because she's married to the King." And Marilyn Quayle says, "You're not breaking ground by being appointed by your husband to a quasi-Cabinet-level position—that's just getting an office through your husband."

Mrs. Bush, too, takes a dim view of the situation, though she seems to see it as departure less from the Constitution than from political etiquette. "If you take on a job, you've got to be accountable for it," she says. "And obviously that was a great mistake, because nothing happened and it caused great ill will. And there were other people who were appointed and confirmed by the Senate to do that very job. I would think that you would be already causing friction with the people who were hired for the job. *I* would never have done that, nor would George have asked me to."

He might well have asked Elizabeth Dole, though. Mrs. Dole is someone who, like Hillary, is an accomplished professional and, like Hillary, has been seen as more of a political animal than a domestic one. She has announced her determination to stay on as president of the American Red Cross if her husband is elected President. But there's no comparison between the role she imagines for herself and the one Hillary has taken on, Mrs. Dole observes: "Hers involved what percentage of our G.N.P.? Quite a large percentage. It was the whole health-care system for America, and it was very much a different focus. It was inside the White House." She adds, "You see, I've *served* as a Cabinet member in two Presidents' Cabinets—I don't want to sit in on Cabinet meetings."

And yet the Hillary problem does have the air of something slightly factitious. It's easy to point to previous First Ladies who have wielded significant power (and Hillary notes that "you can go back and find Mrs. Taft consulting with Cabinet members, Eleanor Roosevelt doing everything, Mrs. Carter appointed to chair a commission"). More to the point, perhaps, is the fact that voters do not elect a President's friends, either, yet they often have an incalculable sway over the President's Administration. Nor is the position of White House Chief of Staff, arguably the most powerful one in most Administrations, subject to Senate confirmation. Hillary's sex may well prevent us from seeing how familiar the role she plays really is in Presidential history. As Garry Wills has argued, the best parallel is with such Presidential companions as F.D.R.'s confidant Louis Howe or Dwight D. Eisenhower's brother Milton. Then, too, it isn't so obvious that, as the familiar claim goes, "you can't fire her," when one could argue that this is, in effect, just what the President did.

To judge from the way many conservatives talk, what they'd really like to do is *impeach* her. Some Republicans who weathered the Senate hearings of the Nixon era may have decided that one good scandal deserves another. Watergate, of course, had all the hallmarks of the modern scandal: it was, in essence, not about the precipitating illegality but about the act of covering it up. Whitewater, in turn, is the perfect postmodern scandal: the latest and most serious charges allege an act of covering up an act of covering up, while so far nobody has unearthed an original sin.

It was in the 1992 primaries that the Jerry Brown campaign first raised the question about a possible conflict of interest posed by Hillary Clinton's having represented Madison Guaranty Savings & Loan before a state agency. You'll recall that it prompted her most notorious comment of the campaign: "I suppose I could have stayed home, baked cookies, and had teas, but what I decided was to fulfill my profession." (With some asperity, Marilyn Quayle tells me, "If the press had done its job when Jerry Brown first brought it up, we wouldn't *be* in this position.") And yet you might argue that from the perspective of modern feminism a practicing attorney married to a governor *is* in something of a double bind. On the one hand, Mickey Kaus, writing in *The New Republic*, has accused Bill Clinton's wife of being a "false feminist" for hitching her star to his. On the other hand, if you are an attorney and you continue your professional career in a poor Southern state where your husband is the chief executive (and where the prospects of patronage are, let us say, loosely bounded), you will have a difficult time avoiding, at the least, the appearance of impropriety. Political candidates and officeholders can be expected to accentuate the positive and minimize the unseemly; but was a line crossed? It would be one thing if Hillary were found guilty of criminal misconduct. The findings, however, are likely to be far more equivocal. We are, alas, all fallen creatures, and politicians are more fallen than most. (It would be hard to explain to a Martian why what PACs do, for instance, isn't just a form of legalized bribery.) So at the end of the day you need to decide not only how much of the opposition's case is true but also how much it matters. "Follow the money," the old muckraker's shibboleth has it. But one place the money trail leads is to right-wing millionaires like Richard Scaife, who have lavishly funded "investigative journalism" into the Clintons' finances, Vincent Foster's death, and the like.

Now, for all we know, Hillary Clinton may be guilty of everything she's accused of and more. You might say the point is that we *don't* know. And it's in those dark gaps in our knowledge that the political unconscious makes itself felt: you can't tell a gun from a cigarette by the smoke alone. Which inference you prefer depends on which story you prefer—assuming you've been given one. (What's with those mysteriously rematerialized files, anyway? Some free advice from Aristotle's Rhetoric: "A likely impossibility is always preferable to an unconvincing possibility.")

If you're a Republican, of course, you may find poetic justice in the Senate hearing, the subpoena, the federal investigator, the independent counsel. A conservative friend of mine sees instructive similarities in the prosecution of Michael Deaver. Starting in 1986, Deaver, as a prominent member of the Reagan Administration who subsequently cashed in as a high-powered lobbyist, found himself the subject of a House investigation into whether he had violated "revolving door" rules meant to discourage profiteering from public service. There's real doubt whether, technically speaking, he had actually violated any such rules, but there's no doubt that he let himself be pictured on the cover of *Time* in a lavish-looking limousine, and holding a cellular phone to his ear. Deaver had become the symbol of a hated political class—of the get-rich-quick culture of Reaganism—and it was for the collective guilt of that class that he

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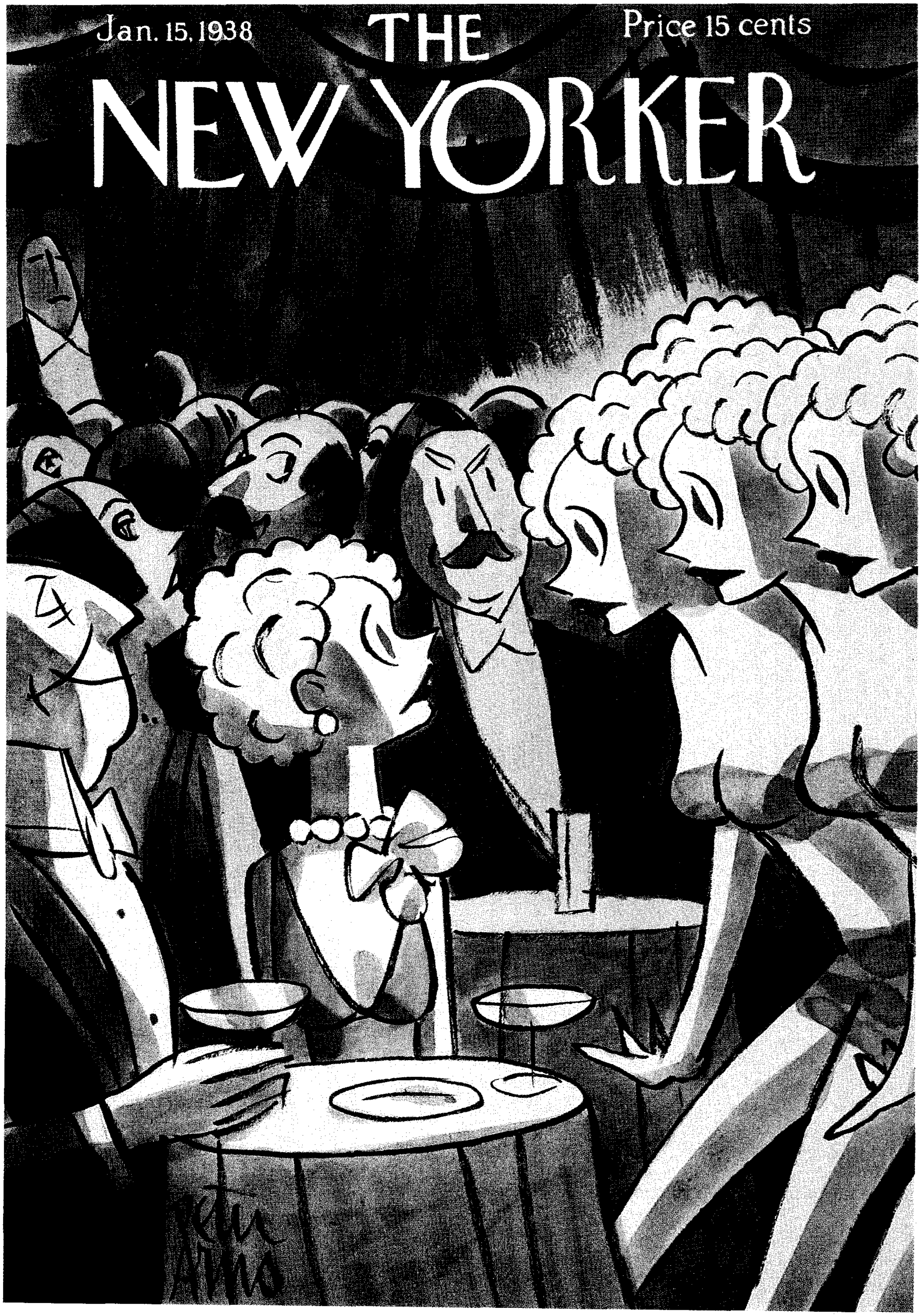
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THE NEW YORKER
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had to be punished. (The original charges remain unproved, though Deaver, having been flushed into a self-serving fib, was ultimately convicted of lying to Congress and a federal grand jury.) It's true that Deaver, by playing fast and loose with the ethics rules, made himself vulnerable to the inquisition in the first place. But it's also true that Mike Deaver, in the end, went down for being Mike Deaver. Without granting any moral equivalence, you can accept the claim that Hillary Clinton—by, for example, her relationship with people like Jim McDougal—made herself vulnerable to the toxic combination of an instinctively adversarial press and the conservative attack machine, and yet you can also recognize that Hillary Clinton, New Class hero, has been targeted because she is an emblem of an élite that so many wish to humble and bring low. Senator D'Amato's zeal stems from the perfectly transparent, and understandable, desire to proclaim, "See—they're no better than us."

"Modern liberals like Hillary thought Republicans were hounded by special prosecutors for twenty years because Republicans were bad and deserved it," Peggy Noonan tells me. "I truly feel she did not have the wit to understand that the prosecutorial atmosphere that she and her friends unleashed and encouraged would engulf them, too. You know, for twenty years now I've been seeing Democrats torment Republicans. Remember when Ray Donovan, the Labor Secretary, was exonerated of all charges and came out with the great statement of the eighties: 'Where do I go to get my reputation back?' " For a moment, I hear a flicker of compassion in her voice: "I can see her as a woman, and I have a sense of horror for her—for what she's going through. I just think it's awful." Then she pauses to consider. "I don't mean it's *unfair*."

A KISS

It was not like everyone had said.
Not like being needed,
or needing; not desperate;
it did not whisper
that I'd come to harm. I didn't lose

my head. No, I was not
going to leap from a great
height and flap
my wings.
It was in fact

the opposite of flying:
it contained the wish
to be toppled, to be on the floor,
the ground, anywhere I might
lie down. . . .

On my back, and you on me.
Do you mind?
Not like having a conversation, exactly,
though not unlike telling
and being told—

What?
That I was like a woman admitting
there was a part of herself she didn't know?
There was a part of myself.
I didn't know.

An introduction,
then, to the woman I was like,
at least as long as you kissed me.
Now that's a long time,
at least a couple of women ago.

—DEBORAH GARRISON

HILLARY'S latest bouts of bad press do suggest someone whose sense of public relations is less than finely honed. Take the miscalculation that led to what Katha Pollitt has dubbed "Thankyougate." It started with the decision to hire Barbara Feinman to help out with the research for and writing of "It Takes a Village" (and not since Clark Clifford's memoirs has the publication of a book had such exquisitely bad timing). Feinman was a journalism instructor at Georgetown who had previously worked on books by Ben Bradlee and Bob Woodward, among others; but although her involvement in the project was announced publicly last spring, Hillary Clinton decided not to name her—or anyone else—in the book's acknowledgments. Sally Quinn says, "All she expected was 'Many thanks to Barbara Feinman, whose tireless efforts were greatly appreciated.' She would have died and gone to Heaven."

In fact, Thankyougate was only the unhappy outcome of a less than smooth collaboration. The manuscript's original due date was Labor Day. At that point, about eight or nine chapters—which Feinman had helped to organize, draft, and edit—were submitted to the publisher. According to Feinman, she was told that her work was satisfactory, and she subsequently left for a three-week vacation in Italy. A White House aide says that Hillary was appreciative of Feinman's efforts but was not fully satisfied with the direction of the book, and the bulk of the writing, revising, and editing took place after Labor Day—that is, after Feinman's involvement with the project had largely ceased. Then matters got a little stickier. There were discussions between Simon & Schuster and Feinman's agent about whether Feinman would be paid in full. "She was absolutely distraught," Sally Quinn says. "For one thing, she is planning to adopt a baby by herself, because she's thirty-six. So she's saving up all this money to go to China and adopt a baby girl. That was part of this little nest egg that she had." (Other associates of Feinman reject any suggestion of financial extremity.) In the end, Feinman was paid when the final manuscript was delivered. Even so, it would be understandable if Feinman felt that she hadn't been treated with the dignity that a writer and researcher with her credentials was entitled to; and it would be understandable, too, if the failure to thank her by name might have added insult to injury.

"It Takes a Village," we should be clear, really is Hillary's book. Nobody denies that its themes and subjects have preoccupied Hillary for far longer than she's had a publishing contract; whatever its failings, this book isn't something that could simply have been sent out for, like Chinese food. But it's also hard to argue when Sally Quinn says, "Hillary versus Barbara Feinman is a big loser, P.R.-wise." She goes on, "Barbara's a single woman, who lives alone in a one-bedroom apartment off Dupont Circle. Not only that, but she has been a reseacher at the Washington *Post*, and all her best friends are journalists. Everyone loves her, and she knows every journalist in town. This is what I'm saying about Hillary being book-smart and street-stupid." Indeed, out of all the writers and researchers for hire in the world, why choose one who is closer friends with your critics than with you? Was the choice meant, in fact, to be a conciliatory gesture, a peace offering—giving a plum and profitable assignment to a favorite of the *Post's* illuminati? If so, the attempt went disastrously wrong.

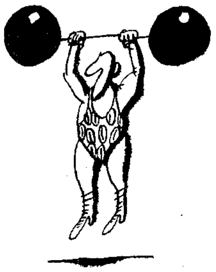
It would, of course, be absurd to look for the source of the First Lady's plight as if it were the Nile: some of her troubles have been created or else wildly amplified by the formidable machinery of the right-wing media; some of them are, as she admits, of her own making; some of them are, no doubt, the result of well-meant actions by friends; and some reflect the mischief of personal (rather than ideological) antagonists. You might say it takes a village to demonize a First Lady. And demonized she has been, even in the mainstream press: a recent *Newsweek* story suggested that, to Mrs. Clinton, Madison and McDougal "must have looked like Banquo's ghost," which would make her Macbeth. In the Harvard library, you can find at least three books on each of the past four First Ladies, but only Hillary is the subject of a book entitled "Big Sister Is Watching You." (The helpful subtitle: "Hillary Clinton and the White House Feminists Who Now Control America—and Tell the President What to Do.") A recent issue of a New York weekly describes the First Lady as "a scumbag, a hand job and knife-in-the-back Babbitt from the depths of the American horror." Then, there was that Safire column.

All this has led some to wonder whether there is a qualitative difference at least in the tone of the coverage Hillary Clinton has received. And yet she is plainly not the first wife of a President to suffer such treatment. William Safire on Hillary Clinton is tame stuff compared to the columnist Westbrook Pegler on Eleanor Roosevelt. And Peggy Noonan says, "I thought Nancy Reagan was damned for everything. They said she had fat legs, they said she was a bad mother, they said she had an affair with Frank Sinatra—on the front page of the *Times*. They said she manipulated her husband, they said she had a political agenda, they said she fired Don Regan, they said she was a bully and a cheat." Hillary Clinton herself prefers to speak of broader trends: "I don't think there's anything that has happened to me that is, frankly, very new, but I think that the environment in which it's happening is significantly different, even different from the nineteen-eighties." And she cites a study of Presidential press coverage by the political scientist Thomas Patterson, who found that in 1960 seventy-five per cent of the evaluative references to Kennedy and Nixon were positive, while in 1992 only forty per cent of the references to Bush and Clinton were positive. Elizabeth Dole tells me, "I think there's a point where there *are* excesses. You don't want to drive talented, capable people away from public service, and I think that probably is happening in some cases today."

But the negativity also reflects the stresses of ideological realignments, of which Clintonism may be the most visible sign. When Hillary Rodham was still an undergraduate, a friend and mentor of hers from home wrote her a letter questioning whether "someone can be a Burkean realist about history and human nature and at the same time have liberal sentiments and visions." Journalists have occasionally noted her response: "It is an interesting question you posed—can one be a mind conservative and a heart liberal?" The question these days is how to be a mind liberal and a heart conservative—how to be a technocrat with values. To judge from Hillary Clinton's pronouncements, you do that by reviving a

"I'm leaving to spend more time with my family."

tradition of civic republicanism which has been in partial eclipse for the past half century. In "It Takes a Village," for example, she writes with sympathy about "character education," about William Bennett and C. DeLores Tucker's campaign against violent lyrics, about teen-age abstinence, about civic responsibility and the virtues of voluntarism. In conversation, too, many of her points of reference are social scientists whose findings tend to affirm civic culture as against rights-based liberalism. She'll talk, fluently, about the psychologist Claude Steele (and his theory of stereotype vulnerability) or the feminist educator Carol Gilligan (and her work on the gendered nature of moral epistemology) or the political scientist Robert Putnam (and his neo-Tocquevillean research on "social capital" and democracy). So when Mrs. Clinton called herself a "conservative in the true sense of the word," she wasn't necessarily playing word games. The Clinton Administration is often described as soft, floating, indistinct, unformed—predicates that do a rather good job of describing the amoeba, that protean creature which kills by engulfing and assimilating its prey. I'd guess that to its unicellular fellows the bloblike amoeba must seem a silly thing—until they discover they're *inside* it. This is the politics of preëmption, and if you are its target you must find it profoundly unnerving. It's why the enmity among ideological disputants can escalate even as their political differences narrow (and it's why the Administration's moves toward the right are experienced by Republicans not as conciliation but as coöptation: they see not an outstretched hand but the covetous pseudopod of an amoeba).



Still, there's no politics without people; and, wherever those broader trends are leading, this particular First Lady really does seem an especially inviting target, as all the comments about her "air of moral superiority" suggest. It's true that she can sound sappily pious, but then her job wasn't supposed to be First Ironist; we have Letterman for that. When I raise, inevitably, the subject of coping, she touches on her developing spirituality, on the role of religion in her life. It's just the kind of talk that makes journalists groan inwardly; but I sympathize, since I'm religious, too, though I try to keep quiet about it. (In Cambridge, where I work, religiosity is accounted one of those conditions that suggest some lapse of hygiene on the part of those afflicted, as with worms or lice.) Still, few spectacles are more satisfying than paragons of sanctimony getting their comeuppance. And then that spectre of Mrs. Jellyby has followed her around like a ghostly afterimage on a cheap TV set.

It is often said that in ancient times a man who stood accused of breaking an urn that he'd borrowed from a neighbor was permitted to make the following tripartite defense: that it was already broken when he borrowed it, that it wasn't broken when he returned it, and that he never borrowed it in the first place. The popular prosecution of the First Lady's character has availed itself of a similar latitude. In the course of a single conversation, I have been assured that Hillary is cunning and manipulative but also crass, clueless, and stunningly impolitic; that she is a hopelessly woolly-headed do-gooder and, at heart, a hardball litigator; that she is a base opportunist *and* a zealot convinced that God is on her side. What emerges is a cultural inventory of villainy rather than a plausible depiction of an actual person. George Orwell once wrote, with some wisdom, "Saints should always be judged guilty until they are proven innocent." At times, it seems that Hillary Clinton has been labelled a saint in order that she may be found guilty. The cover of a recent newsweekly emblazoned "SAINT OR SINNER?" under her photograph. Are those really the choices?

"When we say, 'Tell me what So-and-So is *really* like,'" the literary critic Harold Bloom has observed, "what we generally mean is 'Tell me the worst that can be said of that person.'" It's a phenomenon that is easier to identify than to escape, and it suffuses not only journalism but the culture that journalism serves. And the journalist's profound fear of being gulled only confirms him in his dualist creed—his dark conviction that character is a matter of surfaces and depths, appearance and reality, and that the "deepest" layer flatters least. So he offers the skull beneath the skin and wonders why Americans blench and say they hate politics. In Thomas Mann's story "Felix Krull," there's an episode in which the young Felix is taken by his parents to see a famous actor perform on the stage. He's the perfect leading man—captivating, graceful, surpassingly handsome, an image of perfection—and the audience gazes upon him "rapt in self-forgetful absorption." Afterward, Felix is brought backstage to meet him. Without the artful lighting and thick makeup, the actor turns out to be repulsive in every way—sweaty, charmless, and carpeted with "horrible pimples, red-rimmed, suppurating, some of them even bleeding." Felix is devastated. Then, mulling things over, he comes to realize his error in thinking that he has seen through the veil to the reality beneath. "For when you come to think about it," he muses, "which is the 'real' shape of the glowworm: the insignificant little creature crawling about on the flat of your hand, or the poetic spark that swims through the summer night? Who would presume to say?"

Granted, the First Lady neither sparkles nor suppurates, but why are we so certain that reality is always to be found *behind* her public persona, her stated political views, opinions, and values? Why are we so certain that the truth is what has been concealed, and not, like the purloined letter, what's in plain sight? "I don't think you can ever know anybody else," Hillary Clinton has said. "And I certainly don't think you can know anybody else through the crude instruments available to us of exposing bits and pieces of somebody's life." Indeed, is it so obvious that the wheeler-dealer (and breadwinner) at the Rose Law Firm is more authentic than the woman who spoke so movingly at the women's conference in Beijing this fall? Which better represents the content of her life?

If you fear and loathe the press, it will sense that and punish you for it. At the same time, good will as a mental discipline strikes me as little more plausible than gratitude as a mental discipline. Logan Pearsall Smith, the great Quaker aphorist, once declared, "If we treat people too long with that pretended liking called politeness, we shall find it hard not to like them in the end." To complete the thought: you can then hope that the liking becomes reciprocal. It's advice that might have profited another Quaker aphorist, Richard Nixon. Work on appearances, and hope that the rest follows. I'm always brought up short when people talk about Hillary's feelings toward the press as a "mistake"—the implication being that affect, too, is just a matter of strategy.

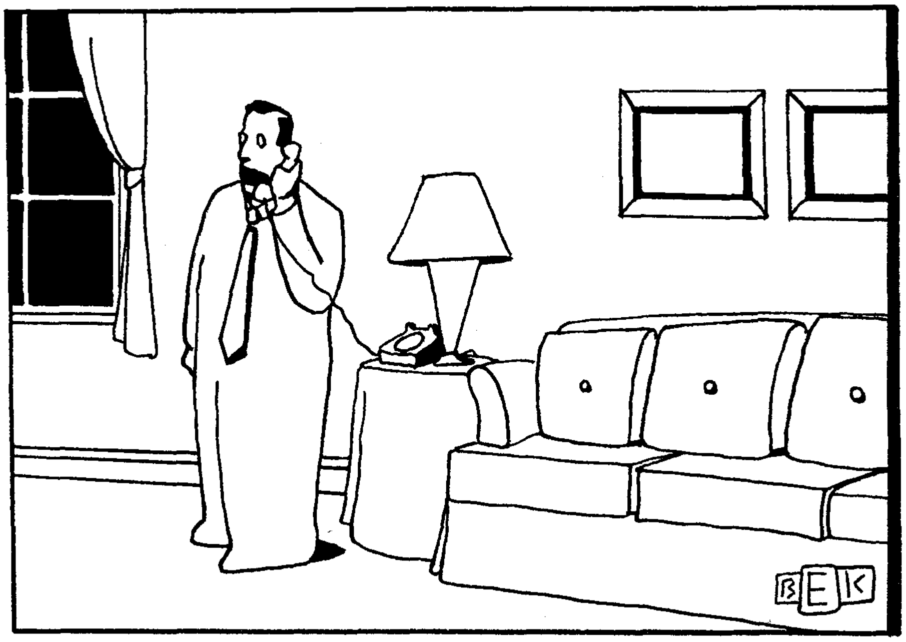
Try putting yourself in her place. During the 1992 campaign, the mainstream press attends closely to the issue of "bimbo eruptions" while the supermarket tabloids cover the story of your husband's supposed black progeny and Gennifer Flowers discusses his sexual prowess in a magazine with a circulation considerably larger than this one's. Months after you become First Lady, you spend two weeks with your dying father, and television reporters stake out the hospital, turning a personal crisis into another media spectacle; a prominent political commentator calls colleagues to spread the rumor that you've been spotted in the White House making love with a female veterinarian; you appear on "20/20" to find yourself closely interrogated about whether you hurled a lamp, or possibly a Bible, at your husband; a bestselling roman à clef depicts the steely wife of a Clintonian candidate enjoying a one-night stand with a campaign aide. And that's just a sampler. Wouldn't you be entitled to wonder why your involvement in a mammogram initiative that will save many thousands of lives gets scant coverage, while, say, your trading in cattle futures fifteen years ago takes center stage? Hillary Clinton can't help sounding utterly self-serving when she tells me she'd like people to look at her "and say, you know, what really matters is that for twenty-five years she's cared about kids and that's been a consistent theme, and maybe I should learn about that, instead of 'Omigosh, she's changed her hairdo again.' " But she may well have a point.

"I'm heartsick about what I'm watching now," Jan Piercy tells me. "We achieved something that I will be proud of until the day I die, and I'm watching how quickly it comes apart. I know profoundly, in ways now that I will never forget, just how deeply divided we are." Piercy was struck by an argument Hillary made when the Gennifer Flowers scandal broke: "She was saying, 'There have got to be boundaries.' It's even truer now. We've got to talk about holding people in public life accountable but allowing them their private life. There have got to be boundaries, some standards, a civility."

The larger problem is that our political discourse contains a stark contradiction: we continue to regard symbolism as subterfuge, even while acknowledging it as an essential instrument of politics. We recognize that politicians, in part, govern by their utterances, the values they promulgate, the image they project. (In dim light, it's hard to distinguish between George Will's statecraft-as-soulcraft and Michael Lerner's politics of meaning.) At the same time, for us village explainers image is less to be seen than to be *seen through*. Politics is for other people.

"Some of the personal attack levelled against me is a not very veiled attempt to undermine the positions that I have worked on and stood for," Hillary says. "The people who hold the view of exalted individualism and think that the market can solve all our problems are not so confident in their position that they don't feel it necessary to attack anyone who has a contrary point of view. And then I've made mistakes and I've engendered some criticism, I think justifiably, for things that I said or did or didn't handle well. So it's a combination of all that." Her gaze drifts off toward the map, with its color-coded demarcation of the liberated zones and the Axis-controlled holdouts. "We're becoming, as a culture, very hard, very cold and sterile in lots of ways, partly because of technology and global competition. So, no matter how one defines one's political or ideological identity, I think all of us have to reach down and redefine our human identity first and foremost." The alternative, after all, is that others will define our human identity for us.

Elsewhere in the building, policy papers are being drafted and redrafted, numbers are being crunched and massaged, speeches are being punched up or toned down. Here we sit in the gloom of the late afternoon, and Mrs. Clinton, by way of demonstration, is looking with willed gratitude at the bowl of pink roses on the long mahogany table. The discipline of gratitude requires noticing things you normally wouldn't, and not noticing things you normally would. "I don't even read what people mostly say about me," she maintains, in her best pack-up-your-troubles tone. "I figure that'll all wash out historically, and a lot of this kind of day-by-day stuff doesn't amount to very much. And, in fact, I look at each day's news and I try to think, What will be important in five years, or fifty years?" Not those roses, which, on close inspection, are already beginning to fade. History vindicates, of course, but it can equally condemn, ignore, equivocate. Much depends on who writes it. ♦



"Listen, Mom, I'm not your little girl anymore."

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DEPT. OF AMPLIFICATION

WITH RESPECT TO ROSEANNE

When her name was linked with ours, all hell broke loose.

When word reached the press that Roseanne would be a consultant for this special Women's Issue of *The New Yorker*, a lot of noses went out of joint. You could hear them squeaking all over town. Few interested bystanders were willing to wait and see what this rumba between Eustace Tilley and a TV icon might produce. Instead, there was a rush to judgment. Media watchers went into crisis mode: they gleefully imagined Roseanne presiding over editorial meetings and grape-stomping pristine copy—traducing a grand literary tradition. Semicolons our forefathers had died for were being sacrificed in a bonfire of cheap celebrity. Some columnists struck a note of betrayal. "Say it ain't so," James Brady pleaded in *Advertising Age*. "Carry me back to the Algonquin," Maureen Dowd wisecracked in the *Times*. Readers sent letters expressing their ire. Within the walls of this magazine, there was serious soul-searching. A couple of writers resigned and gave interviews to explain why. One of the resigners told *Newsweek*, "Put me in a room with a great writer, I grovel. Put me in with Roseanne, I throw up."

Roseanne is no stranger to bad press and public recoil. She has withstood firestorms that could have consumed forests. After starring in a hit sitcom for eight seasons on ABC, giving Liz Taylor a run for her mascara as the queen of the supermarket tabloids, appearing on countless magazine covers, writing a best-selling autobiography, and sharing with us many of her tattoos, Roseanne might seem ready to downshift into the mellow-autumnal beloved-American-institution phase of her career, to bask a little. Instead, she seems intent on being a bawdy, self-transforming force, the Fay Weldon of popular comedy.

Some of the controversy surrounding Roseanne is kindled by her show—from the lesbian kiss with Mariel Hemingway to the recent gay wedding—but much of it emanates directly from her. It's remarkable how she still manages to rub so many people the wrong way. Highbrows and lowbrows "get" Roseanne; it's the militant middlebrows who deplore her, even if they've never bothered to watch her show. (They must have V-chips planted in their brains.) The word that recurs in complaints about Roseanne's involvement with this magazine is "vulgar," but "vulgar" is a code word. A columnist for the *Post* gave the game away when he described Roseanne as "the kind of proletarian brute who nowadays thrives on our TV screens." The resistance to Roseanne is often a sort of rhetorical class warfare carried on under the guise of Good Taste. It's the last refuge of a snob.

Class is integral to the comedy of "Roseanne." The show reflects the economic slippage of the post-Reagan era, when it takes multiple paychecks to keep a household afloat: husband and wife both work, the kids take after-school jobs, and everyone has earned the right to gripe. The comic exaggeration and gritty realism of "Roseanne" reflect the ground combat of everyday family life. Roseanne's feminism derived not from the lecture forum but from the trailer park and the greasy spoon.

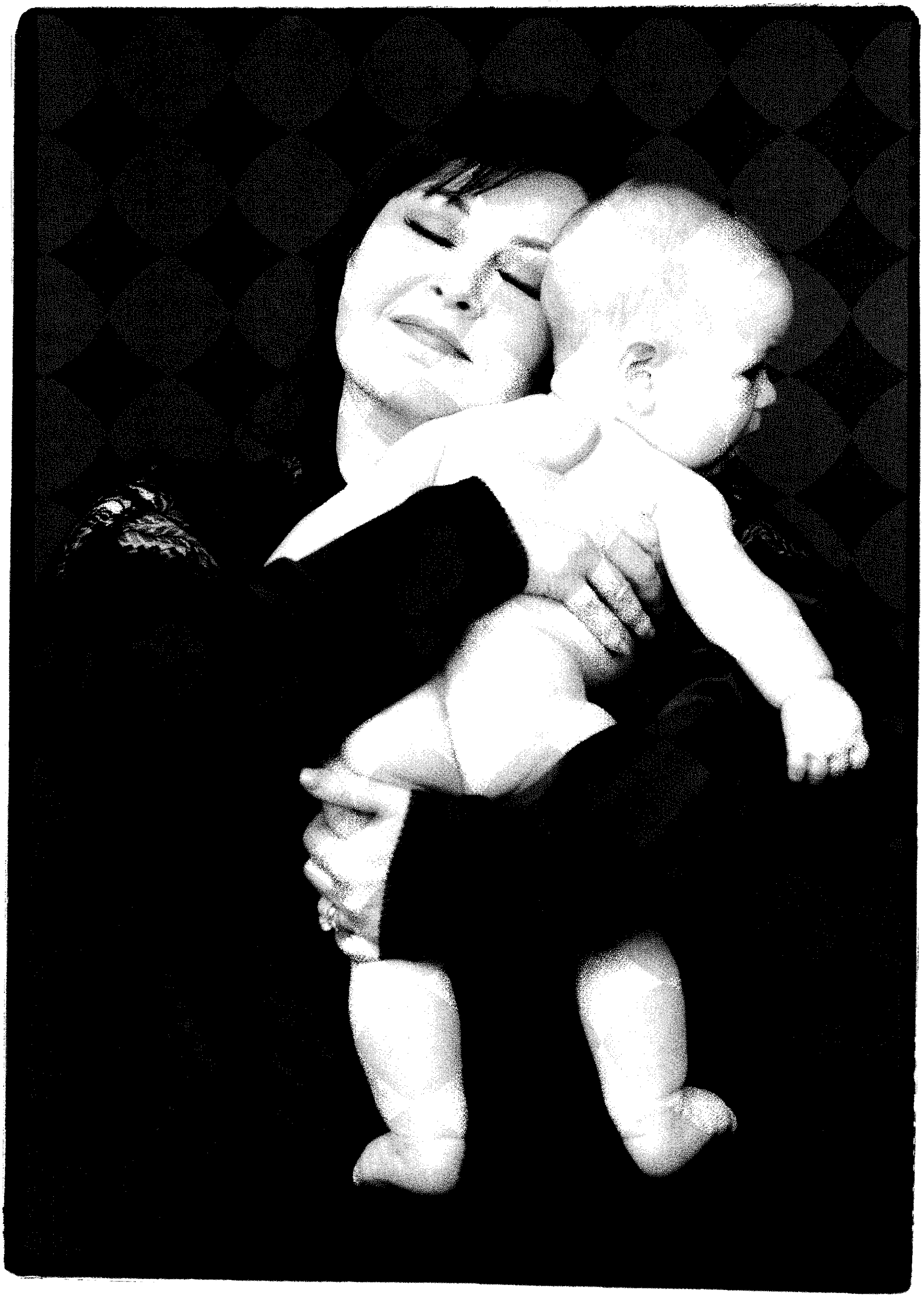
All right, so what did Roseanne do for this issue? For a couple of meetings with *New Yorker* editors and writers, held at her place in Los Angeles, she enlisted fresh voices in a discussion about women—a discussion usually left to ponderous eggheads and talk-show pipsqueaks. She brought in Carrie Fisher, the comedienne Ruby Wax, and the far-out feminist theorist Mary Daly. No, Roseanne was not an editor in the textual sense. But she has the eye of an editor in her ability to pluck one good idea out of a pile of so-so ones and connect it to larger shifts in society. During the two-day powwow, she lambasted P.C. pieties, put the boot to topics that smacked of glossy-women's-magazine trendiness ("There isn't any New Man," she quipped. "The New Man is the old man, only he whines more"), and encouraged us to get women to write pieces in which they owned up to the scary parts of themselves. She also trashed Hollywood's body politics. ("I am a woman, God damn it, and I am more sexy than Pamela Lee or whoever else they've got out there these days. Marilyn Monroe was a size 16. That says it all.")

Roseanne understands how looks can matter more than words. Her own series is unique in its understanding and depiction of the politics of personal appearance. As Julie Bettie observes in the left-wing quarterly *Social Text*, "In 'Roseanne,' the socially 'low' is marked by Roseanne and Dan Conner's large bodies, in striking contrast to the thin and normatively beautiful characters of middle-class sitcoms." Unlike Murphy Brown, who, as Bettie notes, represents a refined, bourgeois feminist ideal—a string pulled tight—Roseanne is a powder keg of female anger molded into the shape of a fertility goddess.

In America, fame, money, and success are supposed to damp anger down to its very roots. To be bitter is to be a bad sport. Roseanne keeps close tabs on her rage, using it to recharge her batteries. And in this way she remains an almost singular presence on television. "Roseanne" may have cut a path for sitcoms like "Grace Under Fire" and "The Drew Carey Show," and Roseanne herself may have served as a tough-love guru for dozens of top TV writers, but the trendline now leans toward "Friends" and its imitators, where nearly all the characters are young, white, pretty, thin, cute, glib, quirky, unmarried, and upper middle class—unencumbered. These sitcoms have become ads for themselves, with shiny characters that look like commercials for hair-care products. "Roseanne" still looks real, for Roseanne resists going easy on anyone, including herself—maybe especially herself. Her humor, to borrow a phrase from the writer Chester Himes, has the quality of hurt. We can stand it if she can.

—James Wolcott

Opposite: Roseanne and her baby, Buck Thomas, photographed in Los Angeles by Annie Leibovitz.



PERSONAL HISTORY

THE INVISIBLE WOMAN

What could a group of well-educated Manhattan women have in common with a young girl in a Moroccan village? Enough to start a revolution.

BY JANE KRAMER

TWENTY-SIX years ago—it was early in 1970, and I was three years married and a few months pregnant—I carried a notebook and a roast-beef sandwich up the stairs to a small studio apartment on the Upper East Side, where thirty women had gathered to approve the bylaws of (they were certain of this) "the women's revolution." I remember the sandwich, if not the day, because my own apartment was close to a deli with great roast beef, and the deli delivered, and so roast-beef sandwiches were what I ate when I was eating alone, which in those days—I see this now—as often as not included eating with other women. You cooked carefully when you ate with men; you said the hell with it and ate whatever you liked when you ate with women, and so did they. Roast-beef sandwiches. Reuben sandwiches. Half pints of Louis Sherry vanilla-fudge-ripple ice cream. I still have the bylaws from that meeting, but now I wish that I had kept a list of what the thirty women were eating while they sat on the floor of that small apartment, squeezed together between a pull-out couch and an exercise bicycle, because it says something about their revolution. It was in origin—and inevitably—a bourgeois revolution, a revolution of women who ordered in, and not a revolution of women who came to the barricades with frozen tuna casserole from a discount supermarket in New Jersey.

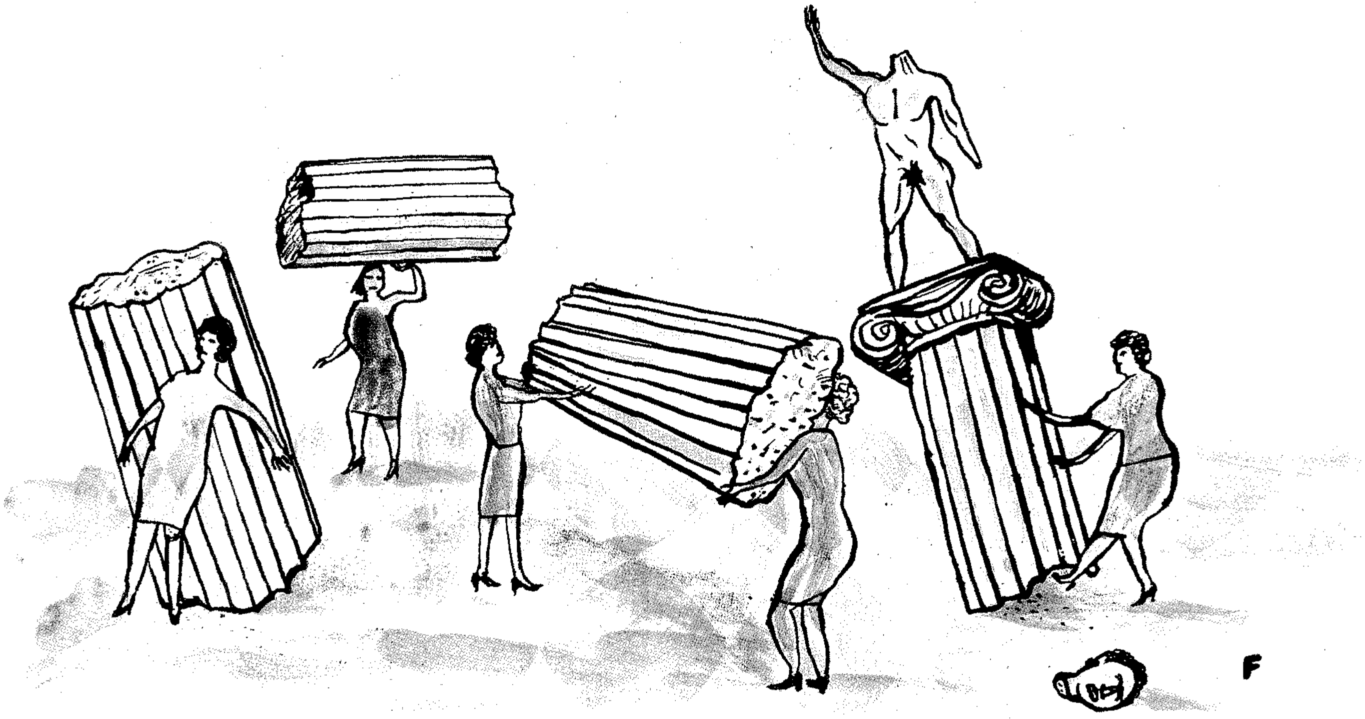
Some of the women at the meeting were quite odd, like the artist who had published a tract about orgasms—she believed that vaginal orgasms were an invention of the patriarchy—and who would probably be described these days as a clitoral-rights advocate. Some of the women were quite broke, like the writer who rented a room in a tenement on what she proudly called "the worst block on the Bowery." But they were all women with some privilege behind their radical lives. They had—to a degree unthinkable in those days—chosen those lives. They went to meetings. They were, after all, in an East Side studio with a pricey exercise bike. They were immaculately, some of them brilliantly, educated. They were smart enough for bylaws and sheltered enough to believe that revolutions had bylaws. But the best of those women—the most persistent and passionate of the women I met that night—helped make a revolution for the rest of us, and one reason that they could (and the women with the frozen casseroles could not) was that their lives really did belong to them. Walter Benjamin would have recognized them. They were beginning to own themselves, the way Benjamin's nineteenth-century bourgeois began to own himself when he took art and objects and desire and "taste" and put them in his drawing room, along with his decorative wife, and locked the door and made of that room "a box in the world theatre," or a universe of his own, or what Benjamin called "the interior . . . maintained in his illusions." Never mind if to own their lives they had to steal them from someone else's collection. Never mind if *they* were illusions or if they often failed. I am just enough of a Marxist to know that any modern revolution begins with bourgeois revolution—that revolution is about capital, even (or especially) when that capital is your soul or your psyche or your own "space," or whatever else your particular moment of history chooses to call the person. The feminist revolution that began in the late nineteen-sixties began as a class revolution. It began with women who owned enough—enough time, enough of that nebulous space—to believe that they could own their lives, too, and not with women who didn't own anything at all.

I went to the meeting as a reporter. I wanted to write a piece for this magazine about the new women's movement, and in particular about the seven women who had called the meeting—angry, interesting, vanguard women, for whom, at the time, I felt all the condescension of the woman who had, as it was called then, "everything." By "everything" I mean a job I liked, a husband I liked, a baby on the way, a room of my own—things that not many of them had together. And so in a way I was playing at feminism when I spent the next few months with those women—"the founding cadre" is what I called them—working on a Profile of their group and listening to them engage in a new and purportedly therapeutic kind of conversation called consciousness-raising. I would describe it now as a conversation about being women, about the politics of being women, but in those days, before everything from kicking drugs to finding God was called a recovery program, it had the furtive air of bathhouse sex or, indeed, of dinner alone (or together), spooned out of an ice-cream carton.

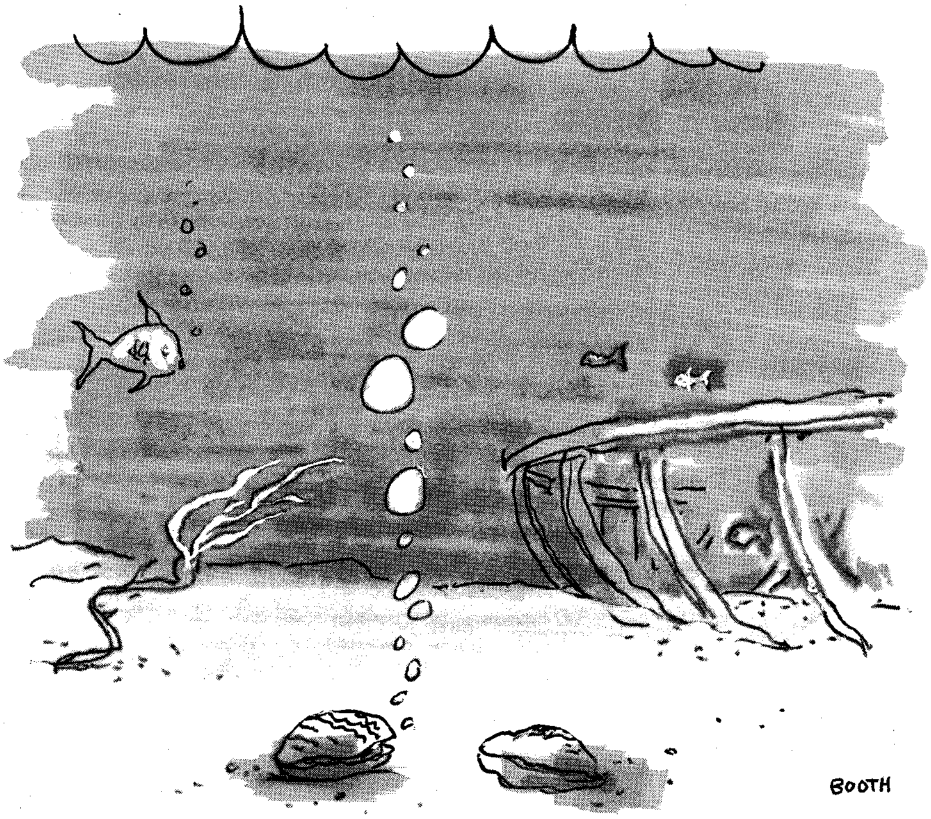
I HAD missed the first stirrings of the revolution. I had recently come home after a year and a half in Morocco, and in the short time that I was gone New York had spawned, along with the group I joined that night, radical-feminist groups called The Feminists, Redstockings, New York Radical Feminists, Women's International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell (WITCH), Media Women, Columbia Women's Liberation, and a couple of dozen breakaway groups whose names I never even knew. The revolutions under my belt, so to speak, were the civil-rights movement and the antiwar movement and the sexual revolution. I had registered black voters, and I had marched for peace, and I had gone to San Francisco for the winter of the Gathering of the Tribes for a Human Be-In, and its corollary acid trips and Tantric beddings. It had not escaped me that the women I saw in San Francisco in 1967, rising and falling on the laps of strange men who, as often as not, were caressing beads instead of them or were chanting in Sanskrit to some distant goddess instead of whispering in their ears, would have liked their liberation to be a little more, well, personal. It had not escaped me that a lot of the women felt like wallflowers at those sacred orgies, since in the end even a sacred orgy is an orgy, and, from the corner where I usually sat, alone, scribbling notes for *The New Yorker*, it was hard to miss the distress in the eyes of those women as they searched the Tantric circle, trying to find the husbands and lovers who had deserted them, along with their trousers, at the communal tub. It seemed to me then that the sexual revolution, while it might be sexy, was off on a path that the women in it might not have chosen, though I should say now, for the record, that my own experience of sacred orgies and communal tubs had ended practically before it started, when I went to the Esalen Institute with Allen Ginsberg—I was writing a book about Ginsberg—and we stepped naked into a sulfurous bath where a group of Episcopal priests and their rosy, Updike-y wives were busy conversing about God with Harvey Cox, the theologian. I quickly fainted from the combination of piety, prudishness, and sulfur fumes.

Not that I didn't like the sexual revolution. It was impossible not to like it after a Quaker girls' school, in Providence, Rhode Island, where the first reference to sex came in the last session of the headmistress's ethics course for graduating seniors, or, for that matter, after four years of Vassar College before the boys came—years when sex at its most lubricious was defined as "everything but." I liked being able to sleep with men. I found men interesting. But I was under no illusion that the revolution at hand was *my* revolution, any more than I was under the illusion that free-speech-at-Berkeley and ban-the-bomb and stop-the-war were my revolutions. Those were revolutions where radical women shone in the reflected glory of the radical men they were attached to, and all the clichés were true: if you were a girl, you made the coffee; if you were a boy, you drank the coffee; and the only way out of it all was to take up folksinging.

Feminism, of course, was something else, although I didn't know it then and probably didn't even associate the word "feminist" with anyone later than Susan B. Anthony and a couple of spinster bluestockings I had encountered in the pages of Edith Wharton and Henry James. The trouble with feminism in 1970 wasn't that it was bold, or even new; it was that feminism was old—quaint and almost comical in its images. To most people twenty-six years ago, feminism belonged to history, along with abolitionism and prohibitionism and pacifism and all the other isms of American utopian history. It was something my grandmother in Providence had done, on the way to suffrage, in the nineteen-tens, something as deep in the past as Lysistrata calling out the Athenian women. And it was over, accomplished, gone. Our mothers voted and they "volunteered" and they pored over the wedding announcements in the *Times* to see how other mothers' daughters were getting on, and, if they were like my mother, they advised us to listen, or to appear to be listening, to the men around us, because men felt good when women listened, and were easily alarmed when women talked—a lesson that I must have absorbed, because at twenty-one, when I started graduate school and sat in a classroom with men for the first time, I found that I couldn't open my mouth to speak for a whole semester. It occurs to me now, in fact, that the only



FILIP PAGOWSKI



"The ultrasound showed it wasn't a pearl, but I am pregnant."

woman I knew with the courage to speak in Marjorie Nicolson's famous Columbia seminar on seventeenth-century English literature was Miss Nicolson herself.

Our mothers' concerns for us were real, but they were not, as it were, global. Our mothers would have been baffled by a Beijing women's conference. They would have agreed with the African women who went to Beijing last fall and complained because American feminists were talking about abortion law when they could have been talking about poverty and polygamy—about the problems that were killing *them*. What our mothers wanted, I think, was to shield us from our own frustrations, and, to the extent that they succeeded, most of us in what is known in the women's movement now as the transition generation (because it stood, so to speak, with a foot in its mothers' world and a foot in the world that its daughters would inherit) didn't know that we *were* frustrated, or what it was we wanted, or why wanting "something" when we had "everything" made us so awkwardly, irremediably different from our well-adjusted sisters. We were put in the hothouse of the postwar American bourgeoisie and told to blossom—if not in isolation, then in competition. Our only recourse was conversation: women talked to each other, and men did not (not, at least, with anything like the same intimacy). Women laughed at themselves, they laughed at men, they broke up laughing and felt better, or, at any rate, less different—almost normal—and this may be why our mothers, reluctantly showing us the door, as the times and our own expensive educations demanded, gave us as their last, wise words the warning not to waste our valuable time with women. They meant with friends. They sent us to revivals of "The Women" and "All About Eve." They told us to watch out for women, to expect the worst from women—to expect sabotage or betrayal instead of the friendship they so plainly nurtured in their own lives. They told us that sisterhood was the illusion. They were not resentful, or jealous of our new, free lives, whatever else we suspected them of. I think that they simply knew by instinct the weapon that sisterhood could be, and didn't want to see us dragging that weapon into the front lines of a battle we might not survive—feminist versions of the first black student at Ole Miss, or the first eighteen-year-old to burn a draft card. They had learned to accept the collect calls from precinct houses in places like Selma and Chicago. They had learned to accept that we would be shacking up or turning on. But they could live with the sexual revolution much more easily than with the feminist revolution. They knew, as women, that feminism was the real subversion. They knew that it could lead us further into an ugly world than we expected, and I think they worried about what would happen to us out there in the world if we began to talk in earnest.

One of the reasons I wanted to go to that meeting in 1970 had to do with my year and a half in Morocco—a country, it could be said, where there were few illusions for women to appropriate. My husband, who is an anthropologist, was doing field work with a curing brotherhood that worked the shantytowns of Meknes, and when I joined him there I was mystified not so much by the women I got to know as by how different they were from everything I had read or heard they would be. There is a myth in Morocco (and among male Moroccanists) of great, even lethal, female power—an extreme and highly elaborate version of the woman-behind-the-throne story with which men who are determined to keep women off thrones try to persuade those women that they in fact rule. The myth goes something like this: It may appear to the outside world that women here—shut up, buttoned up, veiled and draped and confined to quarters—are singularly without power, but the truth is that confinement only enhances their power. Women really have so much secret power in Moroccan life that they sit in the kitchen running the world while their menfolk lie about in the living room (where the women are not allowed to go) eating sweets (which the women make) and chatting with guests (whom the women are not allowed to see). Women are so powerful, in fact, that men are in danger from the least contact—in danger of women's magic, women's sex, women's terrible intentions—which is one reason to keep them shut away.

All this was so preposterous, given the grim reality of most Maghreban women's lives, that at first I took the male monologues I kept hearing on women's power less as sexual paranoia than as sexual parody—as harmless commentaries on the institutions that had produced such helplessness; as good jokes that men and women shared and laughed about and got beyond; even as small offerings of understanding, or friendship. I was wrong. It was a story that men held very much in earnest—though it has to be said that the men I was meeting then were mostly Berber tribesmen and Arab workers, and not, admittedly, the sort of men who had ever claimed to be enlightened. Unlike my husband, who had, in a manner of speaking, proposed, those men had bought their wives for a bride-price, and their wives, deflowered, had promptly lost their currency in the marketplace of human value. Women were mainly as good as the sons they produced, and they looked forward to getting old, getting ugly, getting cast aside into a kind of freedom.

Today, Germaine Greer would call that freedom "crone culture." Betty Friedan would say something more accommodating, something like "creative maturity," or "the fountain of age." But the truth was probably closer to the old feminist saw about men being naturally radical in youth and turning cautious and conservative with age, and women being just the opposite—starting out cautious and conservative and becoming radical as they move toward menopause. And, if old age was the best part of a Moroccan woman's life, this was all to the good, since it came so quickly. The women my own age I met that year, when I was twenty-nine and, it seemed to me, too young to start thinking about having children, were on their way to becoming grandmothers, and they looked like grandmothers. They thought of me as a girl, and, indeed, my closest friend was a girl of thirteen. She lived in a Berber village called Ait Amar, in the Middle Atlas Mountains. Her name was Amina, and she was a pretty girl, with apple cheeks and shiny black bangs and a face nicely decorated with blue tattoos, but she was quite shy. I got to know her mainly because she was often sick and I used to drive her to a healer in a nearby tribe. She would bring him eggs from her own hens, and he would crack them open and find, inside them, pieces of rotting meat or bits of paper curses with which Amina's enemy, whoever she was, was trying to kill her. In Morocco, the enemy was often a she. In Amina's case, it was either her father's newest wife or a young woman from the village into which she was going to marry. Amina knew that much, because those were the women who would be jealous—of her shiny bangs or her good luck or the price her virginity was going to bring her family. And because I liked Amina, and she was suffering, I believed her. Every week, I would drive her to the egg man, singing the eggman song from the Beatles' "Magical Mystery Tour" to pass the time. I remember this because she liked the song. She practiced the sounds, in English, and eventually learned them, and then she would sing along, in a weak tremolo that barely carried from where she was lying, on a rug, in the back of the white Volkswagen station wagon I had brought from Europe: "I am the eggman, they are the eggmen—I am the walrus. GOO GOO GOO JOOB."

The power of women to do other women grievous harm, and even kill them, was one of the givens of Amina's life, and it strikes me now that this was not so different from the givens of my old Providence life—except that in Morocco those women were not necessarily alive. Sometimes they were imaginary women, spirits, *jinniyyat* who struck you, possessed you, paralyzed you with fright, and had to be appeased and exorcised by male curers with attachments to a dead male saint—men who got their power through their own rituals of intercession and devotion. The curers my husband worked with specialized in a particularly lively camel-footed she-demon by the name of Aisha Kandisha, and I got to know Aisha the way, as a child, I had got to know Santa Claus: she wasn't real, but by all the evidence she was there. And she just about summed up what my new neighbors thought of women. My neighbors were terrified of women, and it was clear to them that women, real or imaginary, did truly terrifying things. But Aisha was capricious, and she was everywhere. Nobody shut Aisha away and locked the door, whereas the women I knew were, by and large, as helpless as Amina, and the only power they had was the power of mischief.

I saw Amina through her wedding. I sat for two days in a pile of sisters and aunts and grandmothers and cousins in the women's quarters of a tribal hut, sick from the smell of the dyes in their acetate wedding costumes, which the sweat and the heat and the incense smoke released. I comforted her when she was tied up—so she wouldn't struggle—for her wedding night, and I burned spices to revive her when I found her, two minutes after her deflowering, passed out on the dirt floor of her bridegroom's house. I was not an expert at burning spices. I had thought that some of those aunts or cousins would do it for me, but the truth was that none of the other women at the wedding seemed to care if Amina woke at all. They barely glanced at her body on the floor; it was a body that had lost its currency, a body that was suddenly just like *their* bodies. They left me burning spices and ran ululating into the courtyard, where Amina's new mother-in-law was parading, exultant—displaying Amina's bloody pants on a copper wedding tray balanced on her head. By then, Amina's husband was back with the men, happy with the men, receiving congratulations. He had not been dishonored. He had not been cheated. Everyone agreed that he had got his money's worth.

I was not much welcome in Amina's new village, but then neither was Amina. It was easy to see that, being the "stranger," being the newest bride, Amina was also the source of anything bad that happened. If a goat died, Amina was responsible. If a crop failed, it was Amina's fault. If a foreign woman arrived by car and carried her off to the egg man when she was feeling ill, it was Amina's fault, too. Amina, everybody said, was "dangerous." Amina had secret power. When I asked people to describe this power, the answer I got was "It is in her bangs." Amina was fourteen now, and the truth was that she had no power at all *except* the imagined power of her revenge—which is why she frightened the people who accused her, and why I, being an Old Testament sort of person and not very interested in forgiveness, began to hope that she would actually exact some pound of flesh, that she would at least have that. The better I got to know Amina, the more I despised the folklore that made her so important and exotic. She had never been taught to read or write. Until her marriage, she had never been farther than a few miles from her own village. She had never gone to the movies or seen a television set or even—despite her fondness for the Beatles' song—listened to a record on a radio. But, for all that, her conversation was not much different from the conversations I heard at the consciousness-raising sessions that began that night on the Upper East Side the winter after I came home.

Amina was bewildered by a life that had turned, suddenly, so disappointing. At fourteen, she told me what most of the other women I knew in Morocco had told me—that she missed her childhood and looked forward to her old age. She was frightened of the stranger she had married. There was no friendship between them; she said that they never talked, that he used her quickly, and painfully, in the dark, without a word or a kiss or a gesture of tenderness, and fled afterward as if his life depended on the distance he put between them—between his "freedom" and her "power." She wanted to be acknowledged, although "acknowledged" was not a word she would ever have used, and maybe there wasn't a word, in her Tamazight language, for what she meant. The men she liked were the men who visited her in dreams. She dreamed of a lover who would come to her barbered and bathed and courtly, and feed her with honey cakes and mint tea, and, most important, talk to her. She had no experience of courtship, but her dreams were all about courtship. They reminded me of the daydreams I had had at her age, moping at my bedroom window, counting the flowers on a dogwood tree my mother had planted beneath the window when I was born, flipping through the turned-down pages of a *Seventeen*—the pages where love and pink lipstick and the right shampoo were so mysteriously, so dauntingly, connected—and imagining the boy who would walk into my life and set me "free." And they reminded me of how much of a man's life I was living now, in Morocco—at least, from any Moroccan perspective—because I drove a car and ordered a field assistant around and ate with the men in the long ceremonial salons where they received company, and visited the women of the households only later, in the kitchen, as if I were graciously conferring favor.

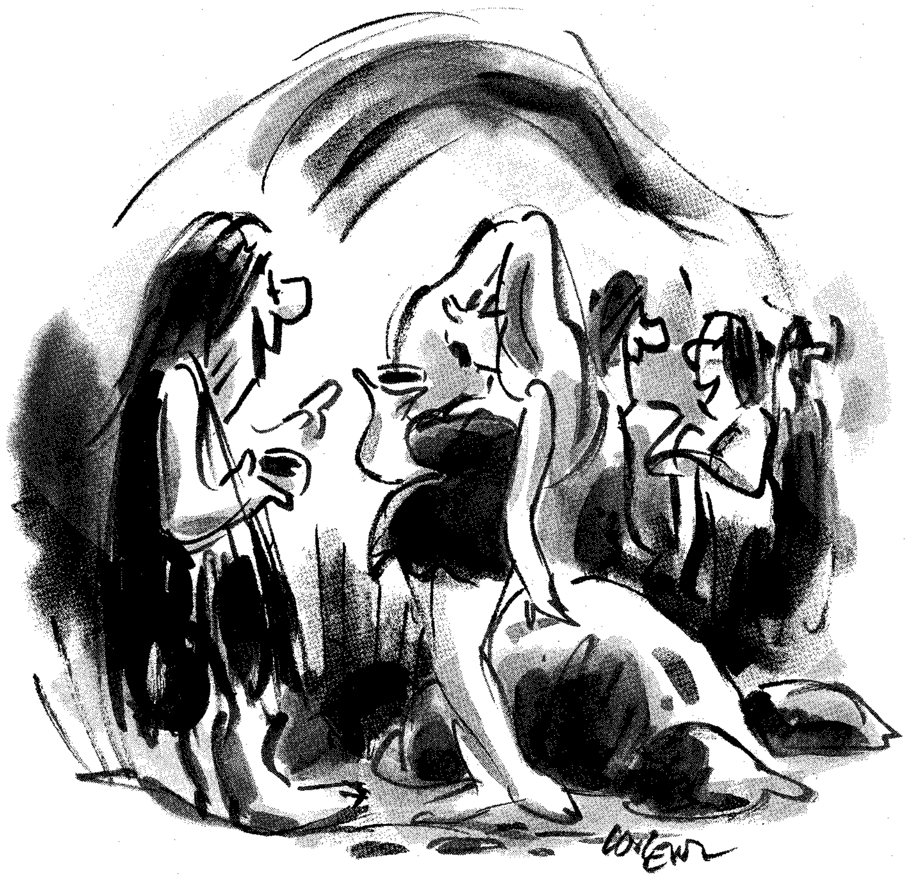
There was a word for me in Arabic—*nasraniyya*. Literally, it meant a Christian woman, a Nazarene, but it was used for any European woman, and, practically speaking, it described a kind of third sex—someone not essentially sexual, someone whose liberty was not a challenge to the way real women were taught to behave. Margaret Mead, who was one of my husband's teachers, had fretted about his showing up in the Muslim world with an ignorant or insensitive wife (by "ignorant" she meant a wife who hadn't been trained by *her*) and she had summoned me to discuss this a couple of weeks before I left New York. I remember her peering at me over her knitting, making it clear that she did not approve of my bare legs and my miniskirt. She said that I had to be careful and cover myself in Morocco—out of respect, she said—and for a while I tried, but the results were discouraging. It was my experience that whenever I put on a long skirt or a caftan or a head scarf I looked too much like the women everybody knew—the "real" women. I made people anxious and angry, often very angry, and certainly I confused them, looking like a woman and, at the same time, acting like a man. But when I dressed like myself, in a short skirt or a T-shirt and jeans, nobody found me provocative. I would even say that nobody noticed me at all. I was sure that, whatever Morocco did to women, Morocco was not doing it to me. But I was wrong.

EVERY three months, I had to leave Morocco to get my passport stamped. My husband and I would drive to Tangier, spend the night in a run-down colonial hotel, where an old Berber professor with a French wife (who were permanent guests and, more often than not, the only guests) would serenade us with beautiful Kabyle chants, and then we would take the morning ferry to Gibraltar, eat lunch, and catch the afternoon ferry home. It was not a journey into the heart of darkness; it was hardly even an excursion, given the fact that the only thing worth seeing in Gibraltar was the rock it stood on, and that the only adventure I ever had there was buying a Cartier watch from a street hawker known in expatriate Tangier for a remarkable cache of stolen goods. But one morning, as we were heading for the ferry, my husband was stopped by the Tangier police because of a minor visa problem, and it was clear that I was going to have to make the trip to Gibraltar alone. What happened next was as mystifying to me as anything I had experienced in Morocco. I froze. I was seized with a kind of terror. I felt as if I were being pushed, against my will and my nerves and my competence, into some horrible unknown—instead of into a pleasant boat ride and a quick, dull lunch on an English rock where the only real danger was that the seven-thousand-dollar watch you had just bought for seventy dollars was worth nine ninety-five. At any rate, I backed off the gangplank. I told my husband that I couldn't go to Gibraltar without him. I couldn't go *alone*. I could not explain why I had lost my confidence, if not my mind—not to him, anyway—but the truth was that I couldn't explain it to myself. I couldn't even recognize myself in the young woman shaking on the Tangier dock. That woman was invisible, even to herself. She could have been in a chador.

The terror passed, of course. I got on the ferry and went to Gibraltar, and by afternoon I was more or less myself. But I was still shaken and I knew that something more troubling than a trip to a rock or even an attack by my old friend Aisha Kandisha was involved. I knew that Morocco had got to me. I knew—I think for the first time—how easily this damage, this condition which Amina would certainly have called "being a woman," could happen to me. I knew how quickly and inexplicably I could be reduced, and I wanted to understand why and how it had happened. I had endless talks about it with my husband. He seemed to have noticed things about my life in Morocco that I had not—how, for instance, if I asked a woman a question the woman would answer me directly, while if I asked a man a question that man would usually look at my husband, or at my field assistant, and answer *him*, as if I weren't there. He was surprised, if anything, that I had been so oblivious. He thought that the freedom I felt, as a *nasraniyya*, might really have been the freedom of not—not in any way that mattered—being there at all.

THE women who got together a year later in Manhattan had one thing in common besides their sex and their politics and their privilege: at one time or another, they had all felt this damage, this same shattering invisibility. And they had been as unprepared for it as I was that day on the Tangier dock, and even as Amina must have been when she came to on the floor of a clay hut and discovered her wedding going on around her. What else did the women have in common? They had Simone de Beauvoir and Kate Millett in common. They subscribed to *Ms.* They had a keen, if ambivalent, interest in the celebrity of women like Gloria Steinem. They thought of Steinem as the bourgeois feminist, because Steinem was the famous feminist—though this did not keep any of them from wanting to be famous, too. Hannah, the woman with the room on the Bowery, craved attention and pictured herself as a movement (her word) "star," and she was often in trouble with the group for "putting ego over community"—which was the group's way of saying that it did not think much of her skipping meetings to go on television talk shows and promote what she always referred to as her "work in progress." Hannah was writing (she used to say this without a hint of irony) "the great seminal work in American feminist theory," and she claimed to "identify with men"; that is, she despaired of ever finding a man who was her equal, and so she used men the way she imagined men used women. She picked up men and enjoyed them and showed them the door, and for a while she had hung a paper heart from her ceiling for every man she slept with; she thought it was a pleasant touch—better, at any rate, than a notched belt. I didn't like Hannah very much, and I certainly didn't admire her, but last month, looking through a folder of old interview notes, I began to appreciate her bravado and to wonder if maybe what had bothered me so much about Hannah's bulldozer style of self-promotion was simply the fact that it was a style I never expected in a feminist. Men acted like Hannah all the time, but I didn't want women to act like men. I wanted women to behave better—though surely the point (at least, the point I missed during what my friend Diane Elam, the feminist philosopher, would probably call my "utopian feminist" phase) was that women should be free to behave any way they liked, free even to be responsible for behaving badly. Men were very much part of our discussion in those days, the feeling being that men were, after all, what Hannah referred to as "the nitty-gritty" of the problem. Barbara—the woman whose tract on orgasms had made her reputation for radicalism among movement cognoscenti—considered any concession to men to be a betrayal of the cause, although she herself was making the concession of living with one. She thought of her lover as part of her "evolution"; she said that she was looking forward to loving women. Barbara was as much of a mystery to me as Hannah.

The women in the group I liked best were Nina, who had survived a nasty marriage to a New Left organizer and was now on her way to a divorce and law school and a career in feminist law; Eve, who worked as a researcher on a magazine and wanted to be a writer; and Beatrice, who was teaching school and getting a doctorate in medieval literature (and who, as it turned out, later married one of my husband's classmates). Those are not their real names. It is a sign of the times that in 1970 at *The New Yorker* the editorial consensus was that radical feminism was something analogous to an odd smell or a kinky preference—something too intimate, too embarrassing, to identify and expose, whatever the feminists themselves might have wanted. I tried to explain that for the women in my group feminism was a source of enormous pride, not a dirty secret. I tried to explain that the point of all this consciousness-raising I was hoping to describe was (to paraphrase the group's bylaws) to break down the oppressive distinctions between the private and the public, the personal and the political, that women had been taught to make. Getting nowhere, I asked the women to choose their aliases. A couple of them did. Eve chose "Eve" because she was going to make a New Woman from her own rib, and I think that Hannah must have chosen "Hannah" because Hannah is a Hebrew name and Hannah



"So you're the little lady who invented the wheel. Do tell me more."

herself grew up in an Orthodox Jewish family and went by her own Hebrew name. The rest of the women left their names to me, so I used the women in my family: Barbara was my sister-in-law; Beatrice was my aunt. I had forgotten the others until I started to write this piece, but now I see that there was a Jessica (for my mother), along with visitors to the group called Joan (for my other sister-in-law), Ruth (for another aunt), and Winifred (for my favorite cousin). I don't know why I did this, except maybe to annoy the women in my family, or maybe to nudge them into putting themselves in my feminists' minds—to make feminism familiar and friendly and even "normal" to a family that still seemed as uncomfortable with me as I was with women like Barbara and Hannah.

I never really knew what the group made of me, beyond the fact that some of the women liked me and some did not. I think that in general they suspected me of an unseemly interest in married life—a suspicion that I must have confirmed when I finally told them that I was pregnant. For one thing, I was the only (for lack of a better word) actively married woman in the group—Nina was married, but she was not only getting divorced; her husband, who had once come after her with a cleaver, was kept at bay with a restraining order—and there was a great deal of discussion in the movement then about whether wives and mothers belonged in radical groups at all, at least as activists. Some women said no, the conflict would compromise us. Some women said, well, maybe, but there should be quotas. And I remember thinking that they were right about quotas after a couple of them showed up at my house for dinner one night, and my husband, grumpy from the conversation, demanded "Where's the salt?" and waited while I got up and found it instead of getting up and finding it himself. They glared at him, but it was I who shocked them. I felt like a dreadful poseur. I felt found out, outed, a dreary housewife in flashy feminist clothes, and, after the women left, my husband and I had a terrible fight about it—a "How could you?" and "What did *I* do?" sort of fight—though of course I was less angry at him than I was at myself for not having had the wit to tell him to get the salt himself and, for that matter, for suddenly caring

MAKEOVERS

ROYAL FLESH

Here's the thing about Diana the Huntress: misunderstand her and bad things can happen swiftly. Take Actaeon, for instance. Just one peep at Di's high-energy water aerobics, and before he knew it he sprouted antlers and turned into lunch for the hounds. Treat her badly and she'll treat you to a quiverful of arrows, for all that she looks so demure, so white, so chaste.

Who knew? There she was in St. Paul's Cathedral, hymned by a thousand choristers, her doe eyes shyly cast down, her voice throaty with nerves; but in the carriage afterward the smile did get very broad, and the wave reached an inch or two farther toward the roaring millions. Still, the fresh-minted Princess of Wales must have seemed a promotional dream for the monarchy, a guarantee of a dazzling future: cover-girl looks; aristocratic breeding; too young to talk back; smart enough to do what she was told but not smart enough to get any ideas; fantastic photo ops launching submarines and chatting up the pensioners.

But then Humpty-Dumpty had great posture up there on the wall.

Perhaps they should have worried about the hats. They never did look right on her: raspberry-pink monsters with brims the size of sombreros, or flimsy numbers that seemed designed to lift with the breeze and let those golden locks wave back to the crowds, or prompt a snowy arm to reach to her brow. When, exactly, did someone begin to get the feeling that the celebrated shape of the Princess seemed to have an involuntary way of escaping its official bounds? It began ominously early: the seemliness of the décolletage encased in black silk; the excessively backlit sundress.

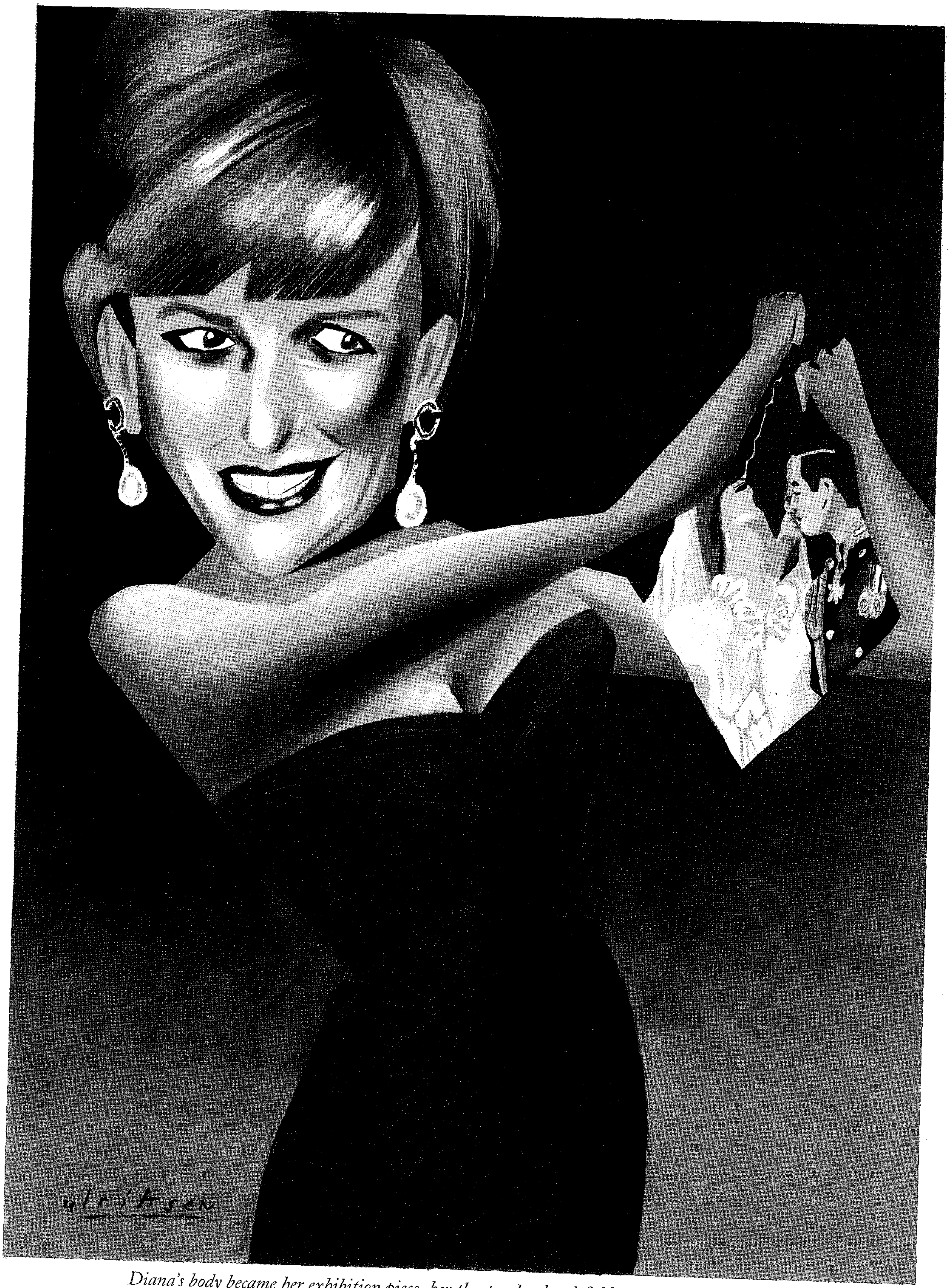
The bodies of Queens of England, traditionally, are constitutional bodies, wholly owned and operated subsidiaries of the national interest. Any who have thought otherwise (or have been thought to think otherwise) have come to a sticky end. Poor Anne Boleyn. The last spectacularly beautiful Princess of Wales, the Danish Alexandra, coped with her philandering Bertie (later Edward VII) by giving birth for England and retreating into a poignant, spectral paleness, wrapped head to toe in black silk and white lace. Diana, too, was supposed to understand her obligation to temper the glamour with quiet propriety. She was contractually bound to be admirable, not desirable: a well-maintained, globally available wave machine, summoned to voice platitudes from Sydney to Scunthorpe.

All this was possible as long as she believed the tabloid romance: that she could somehow be, at the same time, a ceremonial icon and a modern married woman. But when the Prince waxed irritable and let his attention wander mournfully to polo fields of the past, the modern married woman fought back with the contemporary weapon of choice: her body. It became her battlefield, her exhibition piece, her theatre—a site of mutilation, regurgitation, transgression, consolation. What was a girl to do?

Get help, that's what. Reaching for a quiverful, Diana seems to have got herself archery coaches of Olympic calibre, for the arrows have landed with deadly precision on all her foes. At some point in the remote past of this astonishing royal fiasco, someone in the Palace establishment must have thought it would be a splendid idea to get a telegenic Princess of Wales. Good for the public image, what? But now here she is, parlaying the drama into prime-time dynamite—two parts "Masterpiece Theatre," ten parts "Dynasty." The makeover has been from desperate molting swan into bird of prey. In place of the gulping, stammering Sloane is an exterminating angel, media-brief, interview-perfect; the big eyes more deeply set, the look simultaneously victim and conqueror, the voice impassioned and pathetic. Katharine Hepburn as the wronged Eleanor of Aquitaine in "The Lion in Winter" comes to mind. What did the estranged Queen want from her awful husband, Henry II? The king's "vitals on a plate of lettuce." Nothing that drastic these days, of course, but no more nice gal, either.

—Simon Schama

MARK ULRIKSEN

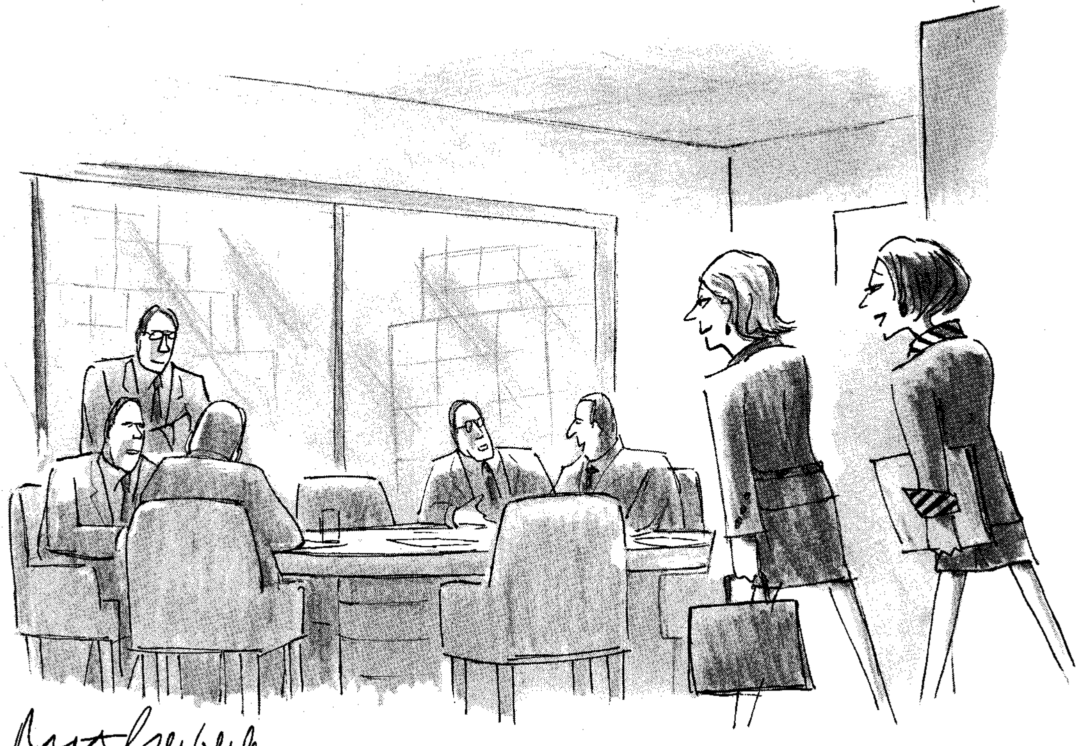


Diana's body became her exhibition piece, her theatre, her battlefield. What was a girl to do?

which of us got it. It was only salt. I wasn't Amina, tied up and assaulted and then accused of everything terrible that happened, from the death of farm animals to her mother-in-law's bursitis to the lumps in the couscous.

After that, a few of the women treated me like a throwback, an irretrievable bourgeoise. The women were good children of the nineteen-sixties. They tended to ignore the fact that it was their choices, and not their origins, that could even remotely be called "radical," but the truth is that even their most radical demands seem perfectly moderate today—or maybe the word is "human." Barbara, who was in some ways the most radical of us all, once gave me a list of her priorities: free and legal abortion, free contraceptive clinics, free day-care centers for working mothers, policewomen trained to deal with sex crimes "from a feminist perspective," textbooks that teach women's history—all things that by now every woman in my family would like to be able to take for granted. Barbara believed in a future where a woman's income would be guaranteed; where there would be "educational reparations" for women who left school to support husbands or to have the babies those husbands wanted; where working mothers would deduct the cost of raising children from their income taxes—and, while it would be hard to find an economist, man *or* woman, who thought this practical or even possible, it is not such a bad future. Only, perhaps, an innocent one. It seems odd now that these women were the vanguard our mothers worried so much about—these crudely armed foot soldiers in a war that was later fought by nimbler minds, by women who were so much more confident of their entitlement, so much more secure in their readings of text and history, and arguably so much more skilled in the arts of sleeping with the enemy. But they were not wrong.

Our group dissolved, some five months after the first meeting. The women were not getting along, and that was the one problem they had not expected. They wanted, as feminists, to be much more sisterly—more open, more accepting, more forgiving, more tolerant. They anguished about why *they* were doing what people closeted together inevitably do when they carry the weight of one another's secrets—they become resentful. I typed my notes and then I went off to cover the war in Northern Ireland, and then I came home and had a daughter. Eve stopped by to see her, and we talked about how the girl babies of 1970 were going to be the true New Women—the first children of the movement—and she stayed for dinner, and my husband got the salt, and it was very pleasant. I never really missed the group. I was caught up in motherhood, and I didn't really understand the group's confusions when it came to motherhood. The longing for a child had hit me, suddenly, physically, like a hunger. It was something I *felt*, not something I decided, and it never occurred to me to resist it or deny it. I thought that raising a New Woman was mainly a matter of raising a woman more or less like me, and if that was naïve it was not, at any rate, an experience that I was willing to sacrifice to "feminism," or to leave to women who thought feminism was untidy, or embarrassing, or strange. The problems, for me, were more or less logistical. They had to do with advising Finnish au pairs on how to tell a stockbroker from a drug dealer at a singles bar, or courting nursery-school teachers who objected that taking a four-year-old to cover the Portuguese revolution would deprive her of a valuable month of "peer experience"—admittedly, bourgeois problems, but not, it seemed to me, problems of feminist correctness. The fact that my husband raised our daughter with me, and often for me, was never something we negotiated, or even discussed. We were friends long before we married; he knew what he was getting into, and he liked my scattershot life, sometimes even more than I did. The morning after I had our baby, he appeared at the hospital with the galleys of my Profile of the founding cadre. He had had a nightmare that motherhood was going to turn me into a "wife." He had never wanted a wife. He said, when I started crying, "But if you don't work now you'll lose the habit."



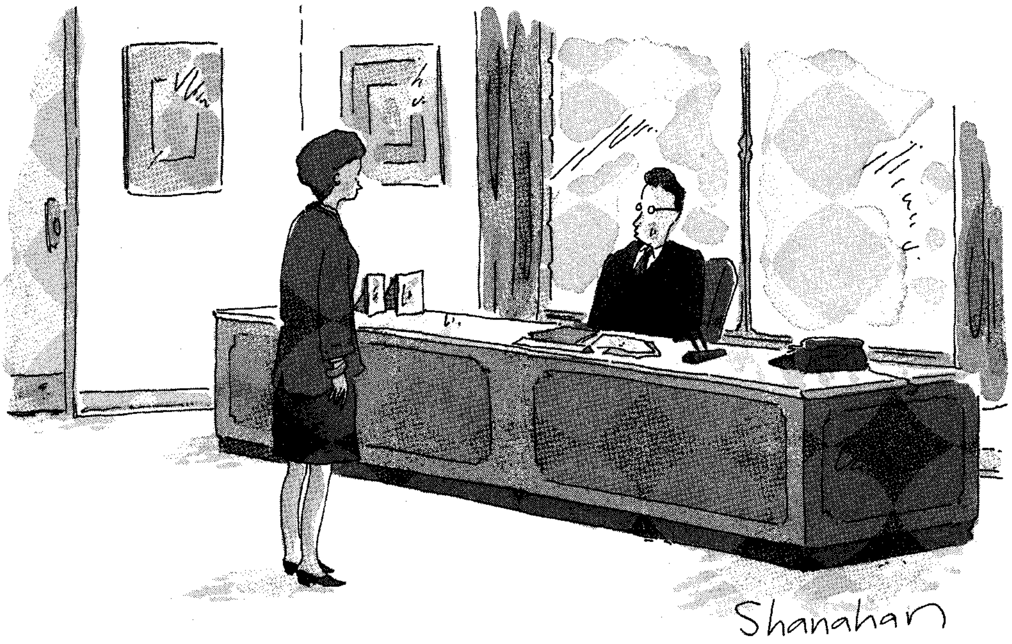
"Remember, now—you're sense, I'm sensibility."

STILL, my time with the group had changed me. I didn't know it then, but I am sure of it now, because slowly, over the next few years, I began to discover—in myself, in my work—a real skepticism about politics, or, more accurately, about any politics that did not embrace feminist politics. I found that I had no patience with ideology, or with revolts or rebellions or revolutions or liberation struggles of the kind that invoke the rhetoric men usually invoke when they want guns or sympathy. I had read Frantz Fanon's case histories of Algerian men; I understood how colonialism had left generations of Third World men with a loss of self so traumatic that their wives and children were literally the only identity (read "property") they had. But I looked at the post-colonial Third World and saw that the first thing most of those men had done, once they were free of Europe, was to push the women who had fought with them—fought for *their* freedom—out of public and political life and back into the house, into the back rooms of the house, into the most egregious domestic arrangements. And I thought, in effect, Listen, men, don't talk to me about your revolutions until you straighten out the mess at home. I became quite fascinated by domestic life. I started to write about it. I came to think of households as the real models on which societies are constructed, and I still think so. I was convinced that if I could begin to deconstruct the relations in one ordinary family's daily life I would know at least as much about that family's country as I would after a dozen interviews with the prime minister. Actually, I lost interest in people like prime ministers. Covering Europe, I discovered that the easiest part of a language to learn was the language the prime minister spoke—which is to say that I could follow a speech by Helmut Kohl long before I could even begin to have a conversation with a German friend. I was not interested in the kind of language that took—as Gloria Steinem once put it—crimes of possession and turned them into *crimes passionels*. For a long time, I looked at the way "truth" passed from politician to reporter to public and then back to politician in the form of "public opinion" as a kind of male conspiracy, in which all the participants agreed to pretend that the words they used actually meant something. I began to look at the world through what you could call a gender lens. It didn't matter whether I was off reporting or in my office in Paris or at home. For years—to the distress of my friends, especially my academic friends—I was nearly incapable of abstraction. "Is it good for women?" I kept asking. What I meant was, Is this real? What does this really mean?

I think now that I was simply a symptom of my own, transition generation. Women were marginal—*I* was marginal—and so it followed that the margins were not such a bad place for a reporter to be. There was certainly evidence for this: the margins gave you a kind of critical space, a shrewd, unimplicated distance from which to look at power and the people who used and abused power. But, more important, I think, I liked it out there on the margins. I felt protected, concealed, safe from scrutiny—which may have been nice for me as a reporter but didn't say much for me as a movement activist. I know that my daughter has no interest in that sort of distance. She likes the fray. She was born to her expectations, and she is not covert, and she certainly never thinks of herself as marginal. She has no reason to idealize exclusion. I remember our lying in bed one night—she was eight years old—flipping channels to find a hillbilly sitcom called "The Dukes of Hazzard," which was her favorite program (and mine, too), and coming instead upon the demonstrations that marked the end of the Iranian revolution. Hundreds of thousands of people were on the streets of Teheran, chanting slogans, bobbing around in a kind of mass trance, or mass purpose. I was caught up in the spectacle, but not my daughter. The first thing she said—she said it unthinkingly; I would venture to say instinctively—was "Where are the women?" I looked again. There were no women. It was not something I had noticed.

I TRIED to keep up with Eve. The other women in the group scattered—out of my life, anyway. I heard that some of them were angry, that they had hated my Profile, that they objected to the fact that their names were changed when their whole point had been disclosure. They had wanted a polemic, something persuasive, something that spoke for *them*. I think now that they were also a symptom of our generation; they did not know how persuasive they were, speaking for themselves. From time to time, I would have news of them. At first, I heard mainly about the women who had left feminism. I heard, astonishingly, that Hannah had left the movement, taken down her paper hearts, gone to the mikvah, and emerged as a Jewish fundamentalist. I heard that Barbara had left the movement and was living quietly, happily, with a woman. Finally, I heard that Eve had left the movement; she had married a man who did not like feminists at all. But I also heard that Nina had opened her law practice. I heard that Beatrice was a professor. And then I heard nothing until last year, when I discovered another woman from the group—the woman I called Jessica, for my mother—listed as a feminist in the directory of the New York Institute for the Humanities.

We never met as a group again. Ten years passed. Twenty years passed. No one called up and said, "We're having a reunion." And so this winter, reading my Profile after all those years, I was struck by how easily and honestly the women had talked, despite their fights, despite their differences—by how seriously they had taken their promise to break down distinctions between public utterance and private truth. I think it was their speaking out, the audacity of that, that changed my life and, because of it, my daughter's life. My daughter and *her* friends inhabit a different world. Their claims are spontaneous. Being the nineties crop of bourgeois feminists, they have a full-blown (some would say overblown) sense of their own worth—which is, after all, what we wanted for them. They seem to have been born feminists, the way they were born knowing how to cruise the Net or get upgraded on a plane or trade in last year's ratty sweater at J. Crew for this year's number. They say "feminist" the way they say "woman" or "human being." They mean, by "feminist," something physical, something normal, something practically genetic. They are quite sophisticated; the only thing that shocks them about feminism is the backlash *against* feminism—the one thing, it could be said, about which their grandmothers knew best. It is hard for them to believe that there are women around who think of feminists as (I heard this in January) "bull dykes with serious arm-hair problems." It is hard for them because the women who say these things are often



"I've never said this to a woman before, but here goes: We're not paying you enough."

• •

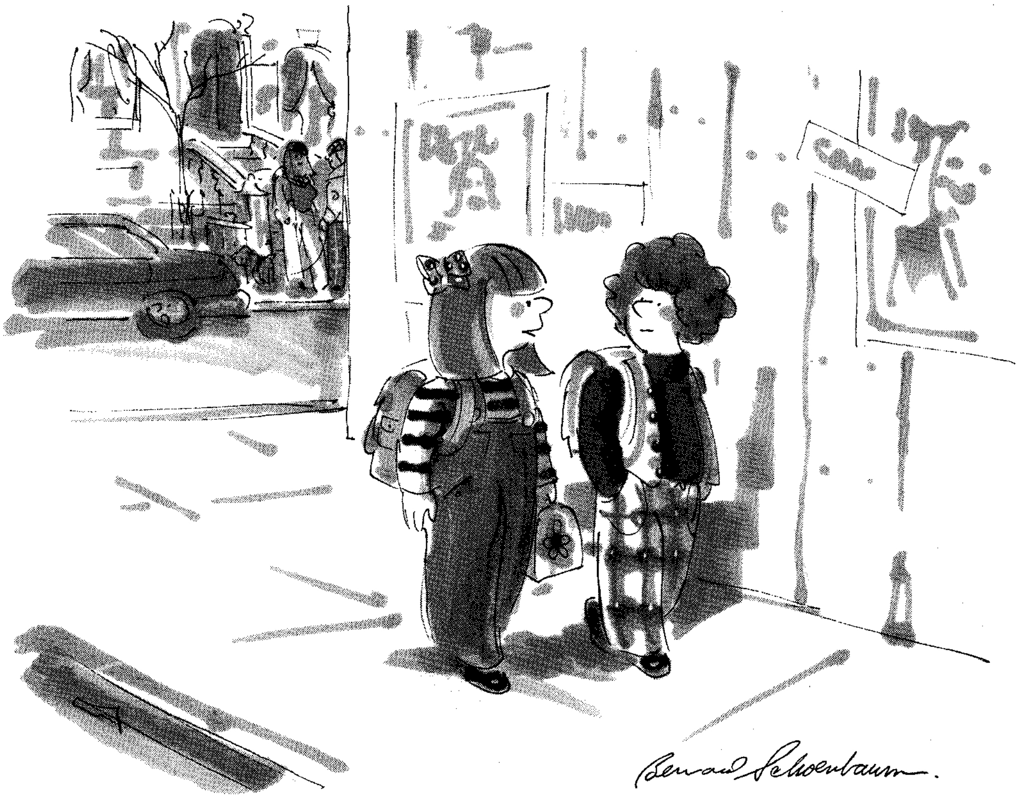
women *they* considered feminists—women with accomplishments and expectations of their own. They honestly do not know why women like that would want to describe a feminist as a failed something else—a bitter, stymied, stifled, unsatisfied something else. It puzzles them, the way it puzzles them when they open the paper and read, say, that *their* Congress is in the hands of people who despise feminism. For them, safe in New York, the 104th Congress of the United States belongs to people from some other country, not their own. George Bush—with the famous "fifteen million abortions" spin that sold his soul to the religious right—was the last public enemy they had who was familiar enough to be real to them. They live in the sweet illusion that the women's revolution is still as solid as the rock where I bought my watch, that the revolution is guaranteed—which my watch, as of course I discovered, was not. It is hard, as a mother, not to want to see them keep that illusion for just a little longer.

Diane Elam, who is twelve years older than my daughter, described today's feminists to me as "a political community that is negotiating a whole set of questions," and that is as good a definition of feminism as I have heard, since it isn't about utopia and it isn't even about the future; it is about a critical impulse, a way of thinking about the world, that is juicy, subversive, and severe. Feminists these days do not have consciousness-raising sessions. They do what bourgeois activists always do once their priorities are clear. They work the courts; they try to change laws and set precedents. They sit in English departments and history departments and art departments; they try to look at the way language works, and at how literature and art create and mirror stereotypes and attitudes and conventions. Some are brilliant, subtle, remarkable in their insights. Some are foolish. Some are wrong. Some write books that quickly become classics of feminist theory; some write books with subjects like "masturbation, gender, and the postmodern crisis." In other words, these women run the gamut from dazzling to dumb, just like everybody else.

I would say that the best of them are up to something important, if for no other reason than that the right fears them. They look at the unlovely alliance between the Christian right, the Catholic Church, and the Muslim fundamentalists—which surfaced last year in Cairo at the world-population conference, and then in Beijing, at the United Nations women's conference—as a measure of their own impact. They are not overly concerned by what they call the "gargoyles"—the stereotypes that the word "feminism" seems to have come to represent. They think of images of bull dykes with serious arm-hair problems as fallout from the identity politics of "the early years"—*my* years. And they are comfortably bourgeois, which my group certainly was not; they do not subscribe to what I would call "the Roseanne fallacy"—the assumption that getting battered in a trailer park gives a woman more insight into women's lives than a tenure battle at Harvard Law School. They know that they haven't suffered, that they have next to no experience of the kinds of violence and poverty a lot of other women live with, but then they never claimed that experience. They do not confuse suffering and insight. They accept that they have been nurtured—educated and encouraged to question the old givens of a woman's life. What makes *them* angry is to see their own critical experience—their bourgeois experience—undermined. I remember, years ago, going to speak to a group of women in Levittown, Pennsylvania—working-class women whom I was going to convert to feminism in a single night. Most of the women brought their husbands; some of them brought their parish priests. The men were there to protect them. The men shouted me down with Scripture. They demanded that I "produce" my husband. They wanted to know what *he* thought about staying at home, babysitting, when he could have been out with the boys drinking beer. The meeting broke up in hoots of laughter when I said my husband was at home reading—and that just about sums up my experience on the feminist hustings. I decided that night that I could do more for the cause on Central Park West than in Levittown, and I think I was right, since not much consciousness-raising went on in places like Levittown until Oprah and Donahue tapped into the pastimes and practices of a Puritan America that most of Puritan America had forgotten—staging public rituals of confession, contrition, and redemption, and, in the process, turning the studio sets of American daytime television into sponsored versions of Hester Prynne's pillory scaffold. Hester, of course, was no Puritan. She refused to "share" with the good citizens assembled in the marketplace of seventeenth-century Boston, whereas the women who go on late-twentieth-century talk television love sharing—a gratifying enthusiasm, maybe even a liberating, therapeutic enthusiasm, but not necessarily one you would call a feminist action. I don't know if Oprah thinks of herself as a feminist, or an entertainer, or simply a millionaire. But, in defense of bourgeois feminism, I would hazard a guess that the women who collapse, confessional, into the arms of the Oprah clones on television these days are not the women who lobby Congress, or sit in Congress, or help draft equal-rights amendments. I would guess that they are the women who never heard of equal-rights amendments.

Confessionals make me uncomfortable—blue collar or bourgeois, other people's or my own. Erica Jong's "Fear of Fifty," with its love-is-more-than-a-hard-on epithalamium to her newest, middle-aged husband, makes me just as uneasy as the recitation of any lurid talk-show caller—maybe more uneasy, since in Manhattan I am much more likely to meet Ms. Jong and her husband at a party. I am not in Manhattan now. I am sitting in a farmhouse in Italy, nursing the flu and watching a fat male pheasant strut outside my window and trying to avoid the row of "women's books"—Jong's among them—lined up on a shelf behind me. I have had trouble with most of them. The ones I like, surprisingly, are the scholarly books (the books about literature, the books about painting, not the ones about postmodern masturbation), which seem to me now to have the immense virtue of *not* being about their authors. There are also on my shelf four or five as-told-to books by wildly "successful" women, women who have taught me mainly that money and fame have nothing at all to do with feminism, or even consciousness (although these women seem to have achieved the same feminist-gargoyle status among anti-feminists as the bull dykes with the hair problems). There are eight or nine endless but earnest reflections by movement women, women who have taught me mainly that feminists have different preoccupations and priorities at different ages and stages of their lives, just as other women do—something that surprised me at first, though I don't know why, since it seems perfectly reasonable that young feminists should want it all, and that middle-aged feminists should be turning inward, and that old feminists should be trying to find some dignity in their old age. There are four diatribes by conservative women claiming to be "another kind of feminist"—women sponsored in their search for truth by right-wing lobbies as obvious in their own agendas as the mullahs who accompany Saudi and Iranian women to Third World women's conferences; women who are much in the media lately, pitted against real feminists in order to entertain, and perhaps excite, the kind of men who might otherwise be enjoying female jello wrestling. Those women have taught me mainly that there is no revenge quite so nasty as the appropriation of your opposition's language.

It occurs to me that I would like to take on some of these dreadful, right-wing women—to do something solid and tough, something to expose them. I resent the way they accuse women I admire of sitting around talking feminism to each other instead of "reaching out" to women on welfare, women in factories, women with too little money or too many babies—when it is *they* who want to strip poor women of day care, health care, choice, equal pay, equal rights, and pretty much everything else that might give them some time and tranquillity to talk about feminism, too. But I am a lazy person. It usually takes my work or my family to ignite me, and, though I think of myself as a good feminist, even a militant feminist, the fact is that I spent a couple of months with a consciousness-raising group twenty-six years ago, saw the light, and went off to live my life while other women made the revolution for me. Today, I owe them. I have sat for hours at this window watching a pheasant who has been casing my house for the past two weeks and has just installed his hen and their chicks in a field by the pond. Other people might admire his markings, but I am watching to see how he treats his hen and how she treats him and who looks after the babies. I want to know if the hen is free. ♦



"There's the cute years, then the sexy years, and then comes marriage and the alimony years."

LETTER FROM LAS VEGAS

HOW THE MAIDS FOUGHT BACK

If they were going to clean rooms, they were going to be well paid—so they struggled for their union. And they're not about to give it up.

BY SARA MOSLE

EARLY on a Monday morning last fall, a thin white woman in her late fifties was bending over to dust the legs of a chair in a hotel room in Las Vegas. The thick pile of the room's blue carpet had been freshly vacuumed. The king-size bed was neatly made with a quilted blue comforter. The woman emptied the ashtray and wiped off the faux Queen Anne dresser.

There are ninety thousand hotel rooms in Las Vegas, and, on a typical eight-hour shift, a maid may clean as many as sixteen rooms. "You might go into a room and they done had a fight or sex, and it might take you hours," a former maid explained. "But you might go into a room and everything is nice and neat, and you can be in and out of there in fifteen minutes."

This particular room isn't actually in a Las Vegas hotel. It is on the second floor of a two-story federal housing project in west Las Vegas, a predominantly black part of town several miles from the Strip. The room, a replica of an old suite at the Flamingo Hilton, which donated the furnishings, is part of a small training school for hotel workers. Berenice Thomas, the housekeeping instructor, showed me around: "This is a real bathroom. We dirty it up. We put on hair and dirt—you know, lipstick, makeup, the real stuff. You can't teach people to clean in a clean room." The school is run by Culinary Workers Union Local 226, an affiliate of the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees International Union (HERE), which, in turn, is a member of the A.F.L.-C.I.O.

Maid's work in Las Vegas has become something of a high-tech industry, studied by teams of professionals, who have plotted, for instance, the most efficient routes through a room. "When I started as a maid," Thomas recalled, "I had a bucket with soap, and I had this big old brush, and I had to rub and scrub. Nowadays, they got everything so it's spray and wipe—they got the soap in the bottle and you spray it on and you wipe it and you rinse it off." The work is akin to that of an assembly-line worker's, and, as in many factories, it pays union scale.

Beyond the Strip and the strip houses, Las Vegas has a surprisingly stable middle-class community. To the union workers who live there, Las Vegas is not Lost Wages but the safe bet, the sure thing. Hattie Canty, who is sixty-two, worked for more than a dozen years as a union maid at the Maxim casino and hotel, just east of the Strip. She is now the president of Local 226. She hired Thomas to run the school's housekeeping program, which graduated more than four hundred maids last year. Over the last ten years, when organized labor has been suffering setbacks across the country, Canty's union, which represents hotel workers—cocktail waitresses, dishwashers, fry cooks, maids, and so forth—in nearly all of Las Vegas's major casino hotels, has more than doubled its membership. With nearly forty thousand members, it is the nation's fastest-growing local in the private sector. Although most of its members are women, Canty is the first woman to serve as a top officer. Previously, the union had been dominated by men from "the front of the house"—doormen, bellhops, and waiters, who held jobs involving more contact with tipping customers. As president, Canty has helped to bring new power and prominence to the women of "the back of the house."

Canty was "found" by a HERE organizer, Roxana Tynan, at the Maxim in 1989. Tynan, who is the daughter of the critic Kenneth Tynan, became inter-

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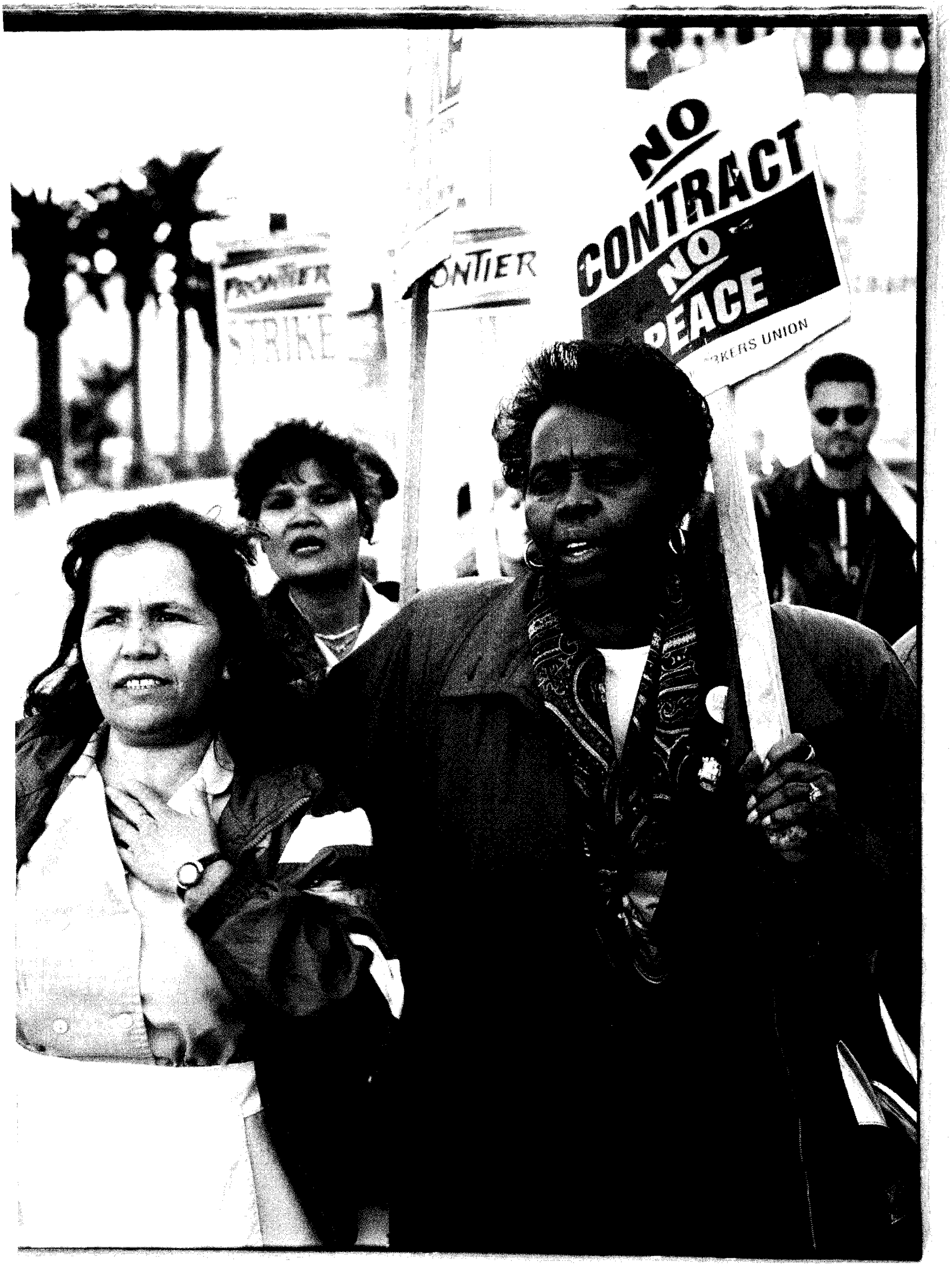

NO CONTRACT NO PEACE
RKERS UNION
ONTIER
STRIKE

linary Union local president Hattie Canty (right) and picketers assemble in front of the Frontier Hotel. Photograph by Annie Leibovitz.

ested in unions in the mid-eighties as an undergraduate at Yale, where she rallied student sympathy for a strike by the university’s clerical workers. Their union, like Canty’s, was affiliated with HERE, which provides support and services to its locals around the country. After Tynan graduated, HERE recruited her to be a union organizer and sent her to Las Vegas, where she worked for the next four years.

Organizers are barred from talking to workers on the job, except in the employees’ dining room or break room; in non-union companies they have no right to be on the property at all. Consequently, Tynan had to find people who were already working in the hotels and were willing to support a union drive from within. “Organizing was the scariest job that I could have imagined,” she recalls. “It’s really awkward. You’ll knock on the doors of total strangers. Then, at some point, most of the workers hate you, because you’re asking them to do something that they really don’t want to have to do”—that is, risk their jobs.

Technically, of course, all workers in the United States (with the exception of a few public employees) have the right to organize and bargain collectively with their employers, but, as a waitress in Las Vegas points out, “you say the word ‘union’ in a non-union place and you get fired. If you want to organize, you’re really putting your neck on the line.”

“In a way, as an organizer you’re sent out to look for Christian saints,” Tynan says. “And you find them, which is even more impressive—they’re always out there.” In her experience, she says, “women are always more willing to step forward in any kind of organizing, anytime, anywhere.” She goes on, “Women are always braver, without question. I think it’s partly because women have less of a problem with the notion of the collective good. They have fewer ego problems. Hattie was the lady that all the other housekeepers talked about. It was like, ‘Go see Hattie.’ As soon as I met her, I knew.”

FLIRTATION, JULY, 1953

Driving north a day and a half from Pensacola, Florida.
My father young, flat-bellied, impatient behind the wheel.
Now in his civvies, khaki shorts and T-shirt.
My mother and five-month baby brother in the back seat of the Chevy.
Long hours of driving, windows rolled down to cascades of bright
  steamy air.
Now it’s night but still warm, humid as an exhaled breath.
A bone-blind moon in the sky hurting my eyes.
In Kentucky, at the edge of a nameless town, an Esso station
  and a café. Moths swirling crazy in the light, thick as snowflakes.
Dazed with sleep. Eyelashes stuck together. My neck is too weak for
  me to raise my head from the sticky vinyl back of the seat.
My mother has taken the baby into the women’s rest room to change
  his soaked diaper.
My father is in the café drinking milk, three, four tall brimming
  glasses of cold milk, he’s still in training.
(Though he lost the big title fight, light-heavyweight division
  U.S. Army, last week. We weren’t allowed to attend, he’d
  said we’d jinx him but that’s another story.)
It’s the smell of gasoline that wakes me.
And the garage attendant squirting liquid onto the windshield.
Then with a soiled rag he rubs away the splattered insects
  in rough erratic circles, leaving an oily-iridescent gleam.
Heavy muscular guy about my father’s age, maybe younger.
A face deep-stained like a football. Black sideburns curling
  onto his cheeks. Droopy-eyed.
He slides into the driver’s seat stinking of sweat, grease,
  gasoline, he’s testing the windshield wipers, then
  the turn signals.
Impressed with the Chevy, a 1952 model. How’s one of these
  hold the road? he asks.
Wearing a dirt-stiffened Esso uniform, on top a metal-studded
  leather vest, and his biceps are bunchy as an adult woman’s
  breasts, and tattooed.
Gripping the steering wheel like he’s driving in my father’s place.

“I DID maid’s work for a long, long time,” Canty said recently to a gathering of graduates of the union’s training school. “It’s a job that I never will be ashamed of.” Canty is an inspirational figure within the union, and her election to the presidency of her local reflects larger changes in labor nationally. Last August, Lane Kirkland, the president of the A.F.L.-C.I.O., gave up his office after sixteen years of what had come to be seen as increasingly moribund leadership. Two months later, delegates at the A.F.L.-C.I.O. convention in New York passed over Kirkland’s handpicked successor and voted in John Sweeney, in the first openly contested election in the labor federation’s history. Organized labor has been in need of an image overhaul. As one room-service worker in Las Vegas put it, “There’s a social stigma about being in a union. Unions are viewed as lower class, and you have people all over the country who don’t want to be in the lower-class club.” In recent years, Las Vegas has been the site of mass demonstrations, reminiscent of the nineteen-thirties, in which thousands of workers, marching for higher pay, better health benefits, and improved working conditions, have flooded the streets, carrying picket signs and banners.

“I AM blessed to live and work in Las Vegas,” Hattie Canty told me. She was born in rural Alabama, and moved with her family to California in 1956. They settled in Las Vegas in 1961, the year after official segregation was ended on the Strip. Hattie’s husband sup-

Saying words I can't understand at first, it's the nasal-drawl sweet-Southern accent I'd almost think was put on to make me laugh. And I *do* laugh, shivery breathy giggle.
Poking me, a forefinger in the collarbone, Sleepyhead?
Asking me, Where you folks goin'?
I tell him Buffalo.
Buf'lo—what?
Buffalo, New York.
You comin' from Flor'da?
I tell him yes, now my daddy's discharged from the U.S. Army where he was a corporal and now going home.
He been in the war? K'rea?
Yes, I say. My voice is proud. Didn't get wounded, either.
I'm twelve years old. A thin girl, flat-chested, bony wrists he could circle with thumb and forefinger.
Tiny grit-hard pimples across my forehead beneath my bangs stinging like red pepper.
My brown hair is pulled back into a greasy ponytail, secured by a rubber band my mother's deft fingers twisted.
I'm in wrinkled shorts, pullover terrycloth blouse, rubber-thong sandals out of a bin at Woolworth's.
I'm sweaty, too, so I keep my fuzzy underarms shut tight.
He's saying, leaning close, You're cute, hon, how old are you?—and I'm staring with this grin, frozen scared.
He's saying in this low-drawling voice he wouldn't want anybody to overhear if there was anybody close enough to overhear, which there isn't, Hey y'know?—hon?—you got one of them flying roaches on you—brushing the front of my blouse, gently, the back of his oil-smeared hand—five-inch roach, the kind that *bites*. Uh-oh!
But it's only a joke, he's laughing.
Front seat of the Chevy rocking with his laughing.

That was the first. You never forget your first.

—JOYCE CAROL OATES

ported the family by working in construction and, later, in trucking. Except for a yearlong stint as a maid at the Thunderbird, which has long since closed, Canty stayed at home, keeping house and taking care of the children—she eventually had ten of them. Then, in 1975, her husband discovered that he had lung cancer. "When he got sick," Canty recalls, "he knew he was going to die, and he'd say to me, 'I could die in peace if I knew you could take care of the family.' I would go and hide the mail. I didn't want him to see that we were two months behind on our bills." He died a few months later, at the age of fifty-four, just shy of their twentieth wedding anniversary, leaving Hattie with eight of their ten kids still at home, to support on her own.

At this point, Canty's story might have taken a predictable turn: at best, a series of menial minimum-wage jobs that would have put her further in debt; at worst, dependence on welfare. But, living in Las Vegas, she was able to join the Culinary Workers Union and get a job earning a decent salary as a maid at the Maxim. (Today, a union maid earns nine dollars and twenty-five cents an hour, five dollars more than the minimum wage.) Over the next dozen years, Canty worked her way up to a better-paid position as an attendant in the hotel's uniform room—a job that her oldest daughter, Rhonda, now holds. In addition to her salary, Canty received health-care benefits and a pension that will enable her to retire a few years from now. "My house is paid for," Canty said. "I bought cars while I was a maid. I bought furniture, I bought the things I needed for my family while I was a maid. And the way I did it is through organized labor."

LABOR got its foothold in Las Vegas with Al Bramlet, a flamboyant union worker who arrived in Las Vegas in 1946 and made a deal with the Mafia. Bramlet promised to recruit workers to the remote desert town in return for union recognition and a few perks for himself. This arrangement lasted, essentially unchanged, until the mid-seventies. Howard Hughes pushed the Mafia out of town, and a few years later Bramlet turned up in the desert dead, stripped of his clothes and shot in the head and chest. (Despite the town's shady beginnings, the Culinary Union is now considered to be squeaky clean.) With Bramlet gone, the union's old leadership coasted, hardly aware of its own diminishing powers, until 1984, when union contracts with the hotels came up for renegotiation. When owners took a tough stance at the bargaining table, workers walked out. Heidi Hughes, an organizer in Las Vegas, explains, "Some cities haven't had a strike in forty years, but we've always had a history of fighting for the union in this town. We've had strikes all along." But, for the first time, a citywide strike didn't force the Strip to "go dark": management was able to keep the hotels open using scab labor. Although most owners settled after sixty-seven days, the strike lingered on at some places for more than a year, and the union lost six hotels. Glen Arnodo, a Las Vegas organizer, says, "Most workers assumed that it was the beginning of the end of the Culinary Union in Las Vegas."

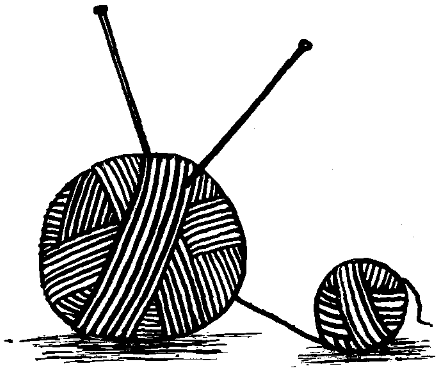
Organizers expected management to try to bust the union once and for all when contracts came up again in 1989, and they were right. The first showdown occurred at Binion's Horseshoe, a famous downtown gambling joint, run by Jack Binion, who refused to settle. In January of 1990, workers struck the casino. The strike dragged on for months, into the long, hot summer and through the fall. Arnodo recalls, "I think Binion thought that we'd eventually go away, but we never did go away." The picketers' persistence paid off. After nine and a half bitter months, Binion settled. The next battle was at the Frontier, one of the oldest casinos on the Strip.

The Frontier, which was remodelled in the late eighties, is now a three-building complex with a fifteen-story mirrored-glass tower. It sits at an angle off the main drag, with a moatlike parking lot and one of the larger neon signs on the Strip. It is owned by Margaret Elardi and her two sons, Tom and John. They bought the place in 1988, just a few months before its Culinary Union contract expired. By law, the Elardis were required to bargain "in good faith" with the union to reach a new settlement, but after months of stalling the family hired Joel Keiler, a notorious union-busting lawyer. (Keiler, whom the National Labor Relations Board later suspended for a year from handling labor cases before it, no longer represents the Frontier.)

After a confrontation with the unions staged by Keiler, the Elardis unilaterally declared an impasse and imposed their own work rules. Salaries for new employees were drastically reduced; workers were fired without cause; seniority rules were essentially abandoned. Women who had worked days suddenly found themselves on the graveyard shift. A forty-hour work week, on which paid vacations and holidays depended, was no longer guaranteed. The Elardis stopped deducting members' union dues from their paychecks, refused to contribute to the union's health-and-welfare fund, and, in July of 1991, suspended all contributions to the workers' pension plans. (The Elardis did not return calls requesting an interview.)

On the morning of September 21st, some five hundred and fifty workers, members of the Culinary Union and three other unions, walked out. Four and a half years later, they are still on strike. During that time, not a single striker has crossed the picket line to go back inside, and, in a show of solidarity rarely seen in labor these days, Culinary Union members voted to double their dues to support the strike fund. Arnodo told me how workers' lives had changed over the course of the strike: "Ninety children have been born, seven people have died, many more have gotten married, and a few moved from town." Strikers have strategically set up "shacks," which look like newspaper kiosks, at points of heavy traffic on the hotel's periphery. They congregate at the shacks and pass out leaflets explaining the issues of the strike; a tape player blares voices of workers chanting inspirational slogans; and, at any given moment, a few workers walk between the stations, carrying their signs.

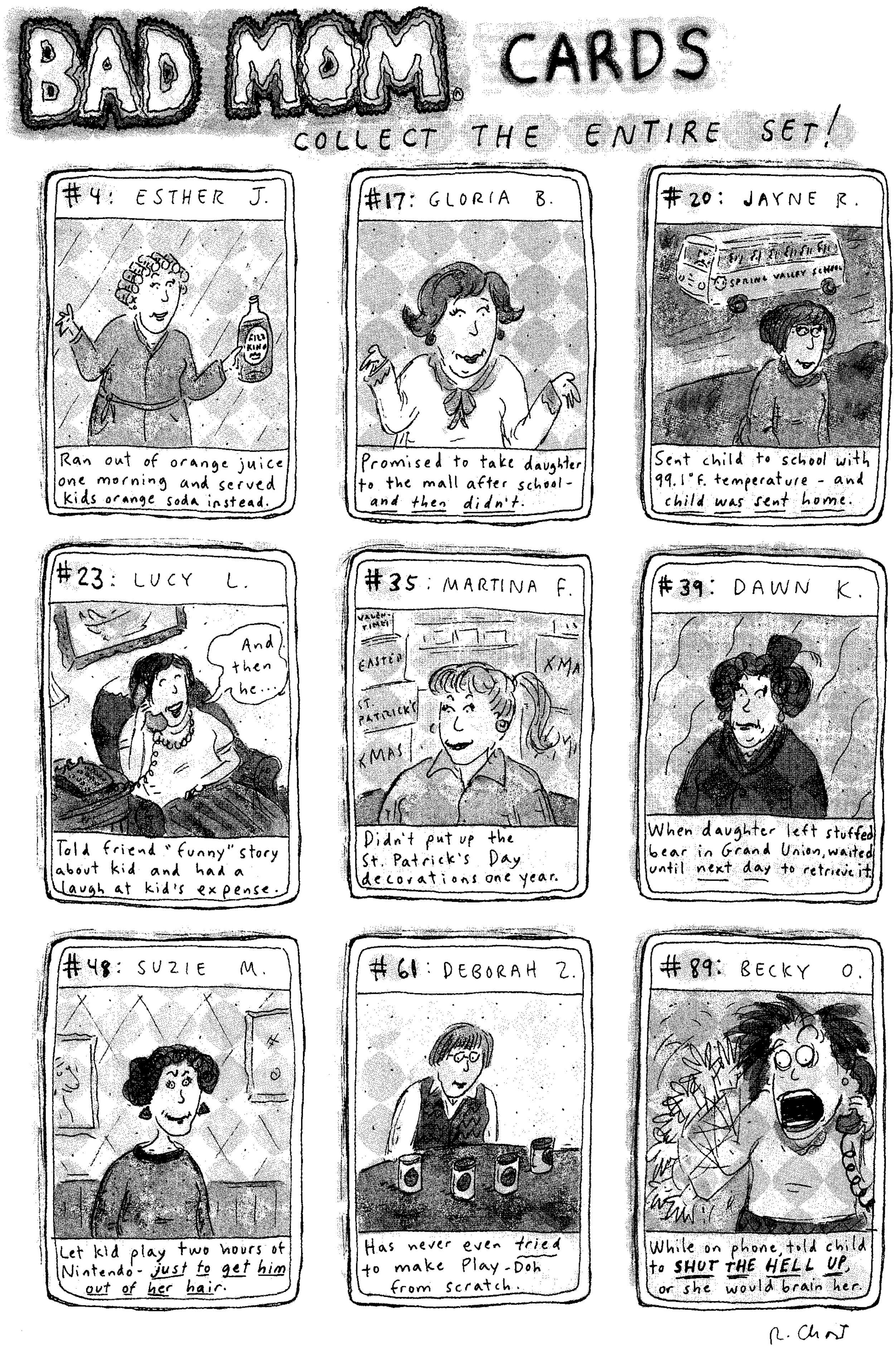
Geoconda Arguello-Kline, or Geo, as her friends call her, is one of the picket captains at the Frontier. A forty-year-old former maid, who now works for the union, she is married and has three children. She has short black hair and dark skin. She was born in Nicaragua and moved to Miami in 1979. Her father had been a colonel in the Nicaraguan Army, and her family was fleeing the Sandinista revolution. In Nicaragua, Geo's family was upper middle class: "We had servants, people to take care of stuff." But in the United States, Geo told me, "we were suddenly a family who had nothing." She went on, "I could not get a good job. I worked under bad conditions—minimum wage, no health insurance—and I had no language skills for looking for better jobs. Twelve of us lived in an apartment with two rooms." Her brother moved to Las Vegas, and Geo followed: "I started working as a guest-room attendant"—or maid—"and I understood how here people were making more money, how they weren't scared to lose their jobs, how they had health care and health benefits. My daughter, she has health problems. She grows tumors in her body. If I was still living in Miami, I would have no money to take her to the doctor. Now it is completely different." Her father, the former colonel, holds a union job in town. "Not until the fight at this hotel did I understand that we were fighting for the whole community," Geo said.

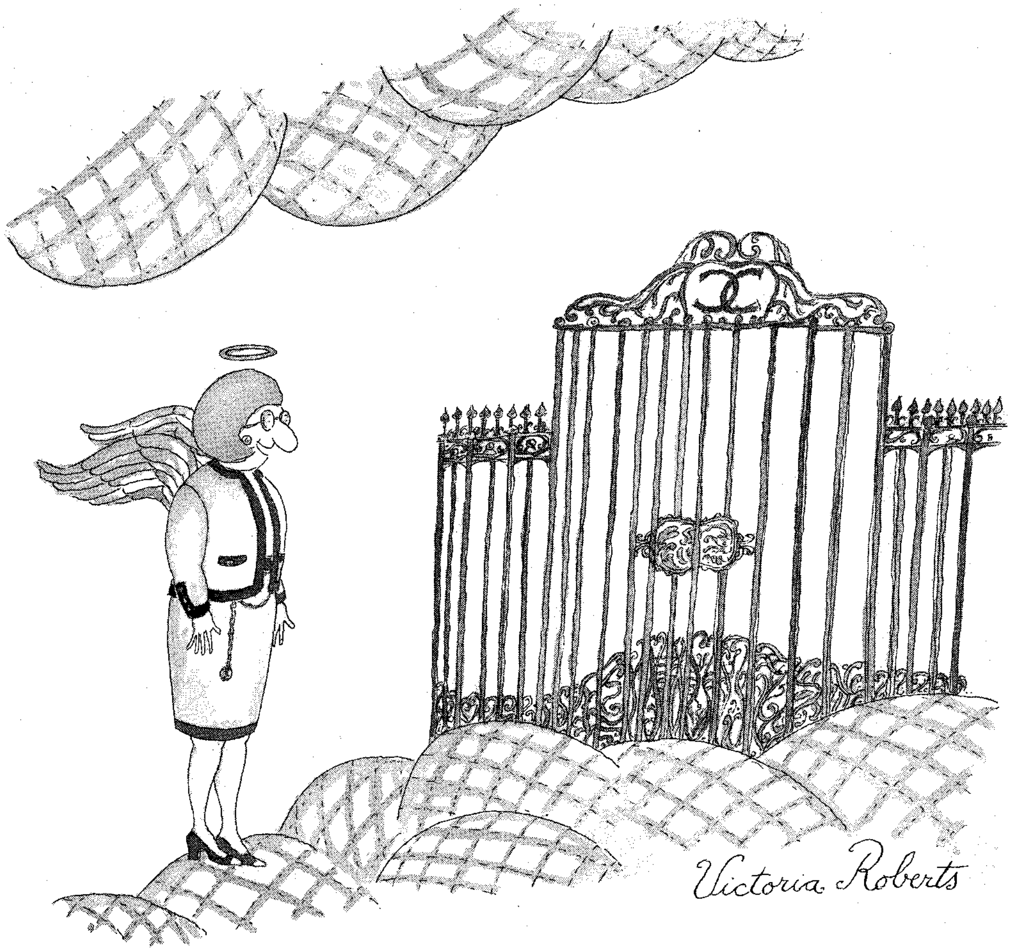


To see what is at stake in Las Vegas, one need only drive ninety-two miles south to Laughlin, Nevada, on the banks of the Colorado River. Laughlin, which has boomed in recent years, is like a little Las Vegas; land prices for some lots are said to match those on Vegas's Strip. The river forms the state border: on one side is Laughlin; on the other side is Bullhead City, Arizona. Some eighty per cent of the people who work in Laughlin live on the Bullhead side, and the contrast between the two communities is stark: on the Nevada side, the casinos rise up like the wall of a neon canyon; across the river is a dry, flat bed of mobile homes and trailer parks. Because Bullhead has almost no tax base, utility bills are astronomical. The majority of people rent. A modest mobile home starts at around fifty thousand dollars and, as one woman put it, "How are you gonna save a down payment for that on five dollars an hour?" Many of Bullhead's roads are still unpaved, and there are few sidewalks. Outside one antique-looking trailer, a ceramic lawn jockey stands grinning in blackface. Most of the area's inhabitants are white.

The Culinary Union has begun an organizing drive in Laughlin and is concentrating its efforts on the Pioneer, a folksy hotel and casino with a Western theme. The casino is owned by the Sahara Gaming Corporation, which is controlled by Paul and Sue Lowden. They bought the Pioneer from the Elardis in 1988. People in Laughlin say that, as bad as the Elardis may be, they treated their workers in Laughlin better than the Lowdens do.

The main gambling hall of the Pioneer is a cavernous, windowless room, where the slot machines, as in all casinos, keep up a continuous ringing. The night I was there, the crowd was middle-aged and boisterous. The men wore jeans and cowboy shirts. The women had bouffant hairdos and wore print dresses or sweatpants, and they tended to keep to the edge of the room, solitarily pushing the buttons on the video poker machines. The pit was thick with men. Cries kept rising from the gamblers at one of the craps tables. I watched a cocktail waitress in high heels and a bandanna-print blue uni-


BAD MOM® CARDS
COLLECT THE ENTIRE SET!
#4: ESTHER J.
FIZZ KING
Ran out of orange juice one morning and served kids orange soda instead.
#17: GLORIA B.
Promised to take daughter to the mall after school - and then didn't.
#20: JAYNE R.
SPRING VALLEY SCHOOL
Sent child to school with 99.1°F. temperature - and child was sent home.
#23: LUCY L.
And then he...
Told friend "funny" story about kid and had a laugh at kid's expense.
#35: MARTINA F.
VALENTINES
EASTER
ST. PATRICK'S
XMAS
XMA
Didn't put up the St. Patrick's Day decorations one year.
#39: DAWN K.
When daughter left stuffed bear in Grand Union, waited until next day to retrieve it.
#48: SUZIE M.
Let kid play two hours of Nintendo - just to get him out of her hair.
#61: DEBORAH Z.
Has never even tried to make Play-Doh from scratch.
#89: BECKY O.
While on phone, told child to SHUT THE HELL UP, or she would brain her.
R. Chast



"I knew Heaven would be by Chanel."

form trimmed with white lace serve drinks from a tray double-stacked with twenty-five drinks. The tray must have weighed more than thirty pounds. In the back of the room, Rebecca Amoto, a tall, reedy woman in her late thirties, was working the bar, where customers stood three deep. Her brow was furrowed, and she was furiously pouring drinks with both hands. On her blouse was a union button.

Rebecca moved to the Bullhead area sixteen years ago. "I was living in Colorado," she explained. "I got divorced. I was twenty-three. I had two very small children. My parents had retired down here. My ex-husband was the violent type, and I basically had to make a big move to save my neck, and so I came down here because my parents were here. I never got any help from him as far as child support." Rebecca has since remarried and started a second family. Her husband is a carpenter in Las Vegas and commutes.

Rebecca's first jobs were minimum wage. "I don't think they pay anywhere near what the cost of living is around here," she said. "My money was budgeted down to the last penny. I'd pick my kids up at school, and they'd say, 'Can we get an ice-cream cone?' And I'd have to say, 'I can't.' I didn't have it. There are things in this area, like Bobbie Sox, which is a little-league softball team, and these things cost money. Which is why this area has so many kids that kind of wander around the streets. Their parents are strictly paying rent and utilities, and both parents have to work to be able to pay those bills. I know a lot of people who are on food stamps."

Nearly all the people on the organizing committee inside the Pioneer are women. "Women stand up quicker," Rebecca said. "Women fight, because they've had to. I had to go through seven and a half years of raising my kids on my own. I had to learn to stand up to people and learn not to be walked on. Women are far more willing to say, 'We've had it. We want a union.' The men are kinda wimping out on us. They're sitting in the back saying, 'If you win, good, then we'll get better paid, we'll get better benefits, and we'll get a pension plan, but you girls go and fight for us, O.K.?' "

Sharon Procter, until recently a cocktail waitress at the Pioneer, agreed, saying, "The men are always full of excuses. They talk this stud-muffin stuff, but when it comes down to doing anything political, to standing up for their rights, they're just a bunch of weenies." Another cocktail waitress at the Pioneer was equally blunt: "I thought the men would be more excited, and at the beginning they were, but then they started saying, 'I'm not wearing no union button! I'm not going to lose my job!' I said, 'You guys are a bunch of cowards!' And here to me they had always been so big and bad."

A union button is hardly bigger than a silver dollar, but in the struggle between employees and management it is as heavy as a manhole cover; countless workers who have tried to unionize have been fired for simply putting one on. At the Pioneer, members of the organizing committee wore their buttons to work for the first time on August 9, 1995. Jean Cleland, a waitress, described what happened: "It was scary. My supervisor came and got me, and she said, 'I have to ask you to take that button off,' and I told her, 'No, I'm not taking my button off. I have a copy of my worker's rights here,' and I showed her where it said I have the legal right to wear a button. She was shaking. And I said, 'Michelle, don't shake and don't be scared. You're just doing your job. But I'm not going to take this button off.' Two hours later, her boss comes and gets me and I said, 'Am I fired or what?' And she said, 'Oh no, we want to talk to you.' " All the other committee members had been herded into a back room. Jean said, "Our bosses were trying to convince us to take off our buttons. But nobody did. The human-resources director kept saying, 'Jeannie, we love you, take it off!' And I said, 'No.' And she said, 'We love you! We love you! Take it off!' " The workers were finally sent home for being out of uniform. Most were allowed to return the next day, but two sous-chefs on the committee were fired. The hotel claimed they were supervisors and couldn't support the union drive; this was news to the sous-chefs.

The Pioneer, like all casinos, has an elaborate surveillance system; video cameras are trained on customers and employees, because of the large amounts of money changing hands. One evening, while Rebecca was closing her "bank" at the bar the phone beside her rang. A few days earlier, she'd given an interview to the Las Vegas *Review-Journal* about her support for the union. When she picked up the phone, a male voice said, "Rebecca?"

She said, "Yes?"

The voice said, "I was just wondering if you got a copy of the *Review-Journal*—you know, the one where you were quoted as saying all those things."

"Who *is* this?" Rebecca asked.

"This is surveillance," the voice replied.

"Now, if you don't think my heart didn't come to here," Rebecca recalled. "It was going, wo, wo, wo! My back was to the camera, and I was thinking, O.K., be calm. Because I know he's sitting in that surveillance booth, and he's got that camera zeroed in on me. Surveillance holds my job in its sweet little hands. And I said, 'As a matter of fact, yeah, I do have a copy of that article.' And he said, 'O.K., I just wanted to make sure that you had a copy before I throw this in the trash.' And I said, 'Well, you know, that's real thoughtful of you.' And he said, 'If you didn't have a copy, I could have got you one.' And I said, 'Thanks,' and hung up." Rebecca took a deep breath. "Now, *that's* intimidation! That scared the living *shit* out of me."

Shortly after Rebecca and her co-workers showed up with their buttons, management hand-delivered a special memo, with the title "Our Relationship with You," to every worker in the casino. It read:

> We believe our objectives at the Pioneer with respect to employee recognition, opportunity, and security can best be accomplished by continuing to interact with our employees on an individual basis rather than through a "stranger" or an outside organization. . . . In addition, we believe in the right of each individual to think, speak, and act for him/herself and we believe in the dignity, self-respect, and fair treatment of all our employees.
>
> Therefore, we believe it is not necessary for our employees to be represented by any outside organization.

"In the almost nine years that I've been at the Pioneer," Rebecca said, "I've gone through, like, eight bar managers, maybe more, and with each new bar manager somebody gets the axe, just for the show. It doesn't matter how good you are at your job. It doesn't matter how loyal you are to the company. If someone decides that you did something wrong or they don't like you or you didn't smile at them the right way or their cousin's brother's uncle needs a job, then *you don't have a job.* Laughlin has always been run like that. At another place I worked, I saw girls fired because they didn't have enough eyeshadow on, or their boss didn't like the way their makeup looked that day. 'You're outta there. See ya. Go clock out.' It's a power thing: 'We run this casino, and who are you? You're just a bunch of cocktail waitresses. You're nobody.' And that's basically why I got involved in the union. The casinos have grown. Laughlin has grown. It's prospered. It's time for the little working people who actually keep those casinos running to get a little recognition, too, and the only way they're going to get that recognition is in their pay envelope."

In all likelihood, Rebecca Amoto and her co-workers will have a long fight to gain union recognition at the Pioneer. A National Labor Relations Board election is a costly process that can take years; even if workers vote for the union, employers can keep appealing the results. Workers who are fired for supporting a union can file an "unfair labor practice" complaint with the N.L.R.B., but the grievance process also takes years. Meanwhile, the union drive can be effectively destroyed.

The ongoing strike at the Frontier in Las Vegas shows just how hard it is to sustain labor's gains, even in a strong union town. The solidarity of the strikers has done little to end the fight, even though the N.L.R.B. has repeatedly upheld the striking unions' charges: one judge, in finding the company's actions illegal, described the Frontier's efforts at bargaining as "surreal." Then, last September, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals overwhelmingly upheld the unions' position again. The court found the Elardis' appeal "frivolous," declared their imposition of new work rules and suspension of the pension plan illegal, and upheld dozens of charges of unfair labor practices. The Elardis were therefore obligated to make illegally dismissed workers "whole" by paying back wages and to restore unpaid contributions to the pension plan. The court also awarded the union double all costs and attorneys' fees incurred by the appeal. The Elardis will, in all probability, end up paying millions, but the cost to the strikers has been at least as high. For four and a half years, they've been without their regular jobs, and six months after the court handed down its verdict they are still walking the picket line.

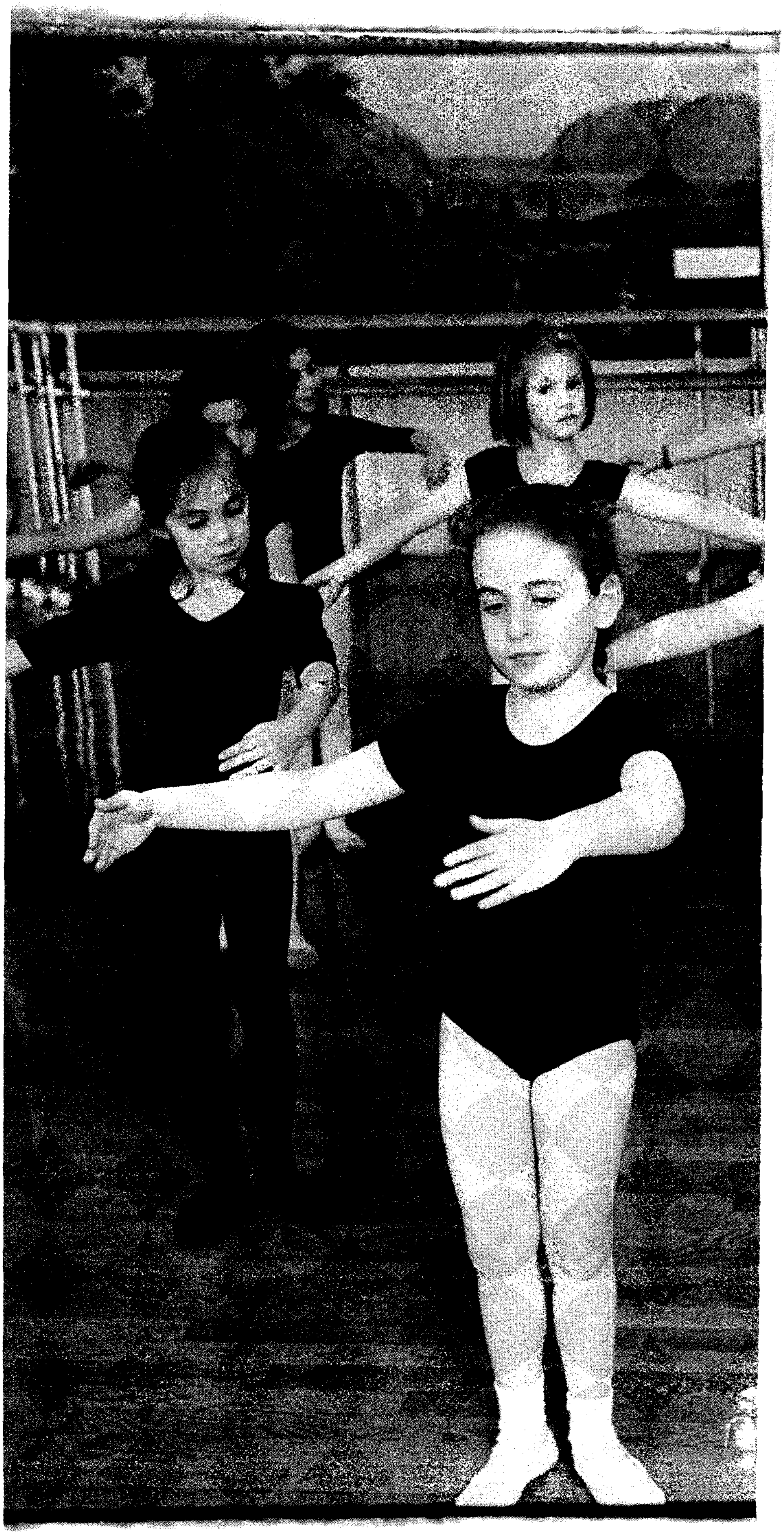
"WOMEN are the future of labor unions," Peggy Pierce, a food server at the Desert Inn in Las Vegas, told me. "I have no doubt that if the A.F.L.-C.I.O. concentrated its efforts on women, a new labor movement would happen." Pierce, who is forty-one, looks a little like the young Liza Minnelli. She has short black hair, fair skin, and enormous eyes. She works in room service, an area that women, by an unwritten rule, were once excluded from, because of the purported danger to them in delivering late-night snacks to guests' rooms. She said, "They think we might walk into a room and somebody might hand us a fifty-dollar tip, and, God knows, they wouldn't want that to happen! They're protecting us from higher wages." She added, "The only women in this country who are absolutely guaranteed to make the same amount of money as the men standing next to them doing the same work are women in unions. If you're not in a union and you're a woman and you work, you're getting screwed. That's seventy cents on the dollar and it's not coming out of union shops but out of the vast, non-union America."

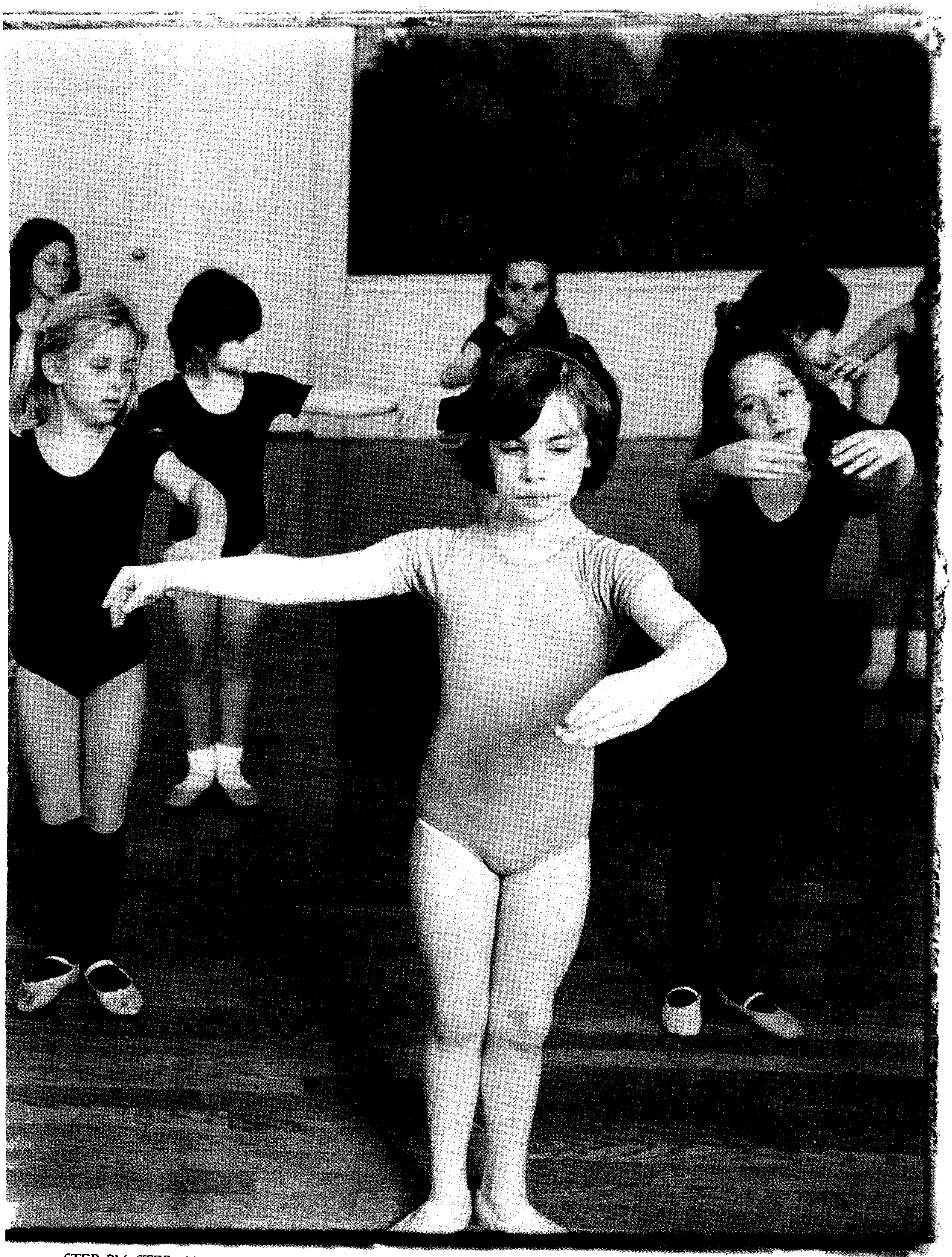
The day I met Pierce, she had just been house-hunting. "Las Vegas is the last place in America where a maid or a food server can afford a house on a forty-hour-week salary," she said. "The economics in Vegas *are* the union. We are the standard of living in this town. If I woke up tomorrow morning and the Culinary Union had disappeared, I would walk in to work and I'd be making the minimum wage and I would have no health insurance. There's not a casino owner on the Strip who doesn't grind his teeth when he has to write those checks for the pension plan and health-and-welfare. But they have to do it, because we *make* them."

When I asked women in Las Vegas and in Laughlin if they thought of themselves as feminists, none of them, except Peggy, said yes. Most of them seemed bewildered by the question. But when I changed the question slightly and asked them about activism more generally, they all saw the union as capable of transforming women's lives. One maid at the Desert Inn said, "You'll find women who were in bad situations, and they got involved in the union, and they left their bad situations, they got out of their bad situations."

ONE afternoon, I accompanied Hattie Canty to the Maxim. As she stood outside the employees' entrance, she threw open her arms and said, "If I could, I'd just put my arms all around this hotel and give it a big hug and a kiss!" We were going to have lunch with Hattie's daughter Rhonda in the employees' dining room. As we walked toward the dining room, I noticed a woman wearing a button that read, "A woman's place is in the union." Canty mused, "You know, I think about this hotel a lot, and this is home. This is where I raised my family. In a sense, the Maxim was like a husband to me."

After lunch, Canty took me to the uniform room, in the hotel's basement. It looked like a dry cleaner's. Long racks held rows of uniforms, organized by size and kind. Hattie showed me where she had worked. "This is the exact space. This is the same table that was in here, the same uniforms, just about everything that was here when I was here. A lot of my youth was spent here, and so my mark is here," she said. "It has not been a picnic for me, but I don't think I'd like to go on a picnic every day. I have enjoyed the struggle. I'm not the only Hattie. There's lots of Hatties out there." ♦





STEP BY STEP: *Six-year-olds in their ballet class at the Spence School, in New York City. Photograph by Annie Leibovitz.*

ANNALS OF CRIME

BROKEN SENTENCES

Women in prison tell their stories straight.

BY ANNA DEAVERE SMITH

FIFTH GRADE: A few weeks before my tenth birthday. Segregated school in Baltimore. My bedroom, where I studied. An O.K. place with a nice window that looked out over a graveyard, which was scary, but we played in the snow there, and I liked the sound of the trains that went by just beside it. My mother was pregnant, with what I prayed on my knees every night would be a girl. I had two brothers. They were disobedient, or so I thought. I was obedient. Or so I thought. But I was headed toward breaking the law. The laws of grammar. I can't imagine where this tendency came from. I had a very respectable mother. An educator. And my aunts and uncles and everyone else were respectable, too. My father? Well, come to think of it . . . He called tomatoes potatoes "just to make us think." He was a black version of Ionesco.

SENTENCES. Grammatical incarceration. My mother began to express a disapproval toward me which I hadn't experienced before. She had an uncompromising disdain for run-on sentences, and for incomplete ones. In school, too, there was a very serious tone about breaking the rules of grammar. And the same serious tone would be used a few years hence about ending up pregnant. In the Baltimore I knew, there was no discussion of drugs, or any apparent threat of them. If there had been, I'm sure the same serious tone would have been used.

THERE was a sudden release of pressure. A few of us were placed in the sixth grade before Christmas. We'd skipped a grade. I was relieved of a fear of failure that was increasing with every book report. The more I had to say, the more improper my grammar became. Thank God the test I had to take to skip the fifth grade had no writing. Just circle the proper answer. Just learn the rules and follow them. Now I had some peace. I did have to write in complete sentences, but I felt it would all be O.K. I could fake it. Nonetheless, I experienced a loss, and I associate the introduction of the perfect sentence with the end of my girlhood.

Truth be told, we all break the laws of grammar. We all have the potential to speak in broken, collaged, colluded, jumbled, run-on sentences. Truth be told, the sentence is sometimes no more and no less than a mask. I have been looking for sentences with enough breath to let the subtext live, in fact, where words don't kill the "truth."

What better place to find the broken sentences of my birthplace than a prison—a women's prison outside my home town? The Maryland Correctional Institution for Women, in Jessup, Maryland, detains many women from Baltimore and surrounding areas, like the Eastern Shore (which was referred to as "the country" when we were kids). There I listened to stories that account for life styles that I barely knew existed in my sheltered Baltimore life. Each time I heard the name of a street, autobiographical images were evoked, of walks with my grandmother, of rides with my father, or of simple journeys to do errands, or to go to another church, or to see a play at a school where my mother taught, sometimes in strange areas of town. Some of those streets never felt familiar or safe, but my father's car or my grandmother's gait made them safe. The stories I heard in the prison told me something about the subtext, the underbelly, of those streets. Times have changed here, in particular for women.

There are about four times more women at the Maryland Correctional Institution than there were twenty years ago, and the overwhelming majority are colored. On the first trip to the prison, I went to, of all things, a Girl Scout meeting. The Girl Scouts bring the daughters of inmates on a bus to the prison on some Saturdays. The mothers meet first as a group, and talk about "issues" having to do with mothering in these restrictive circumstances. There were two whites. The others were black. They ranged in age from their early twenties to mid-thirties. The mothers were coiffed and manicured, and dressed in "casual wear"—jeans, sportswear, etc. (Only the "new admits" wear uniforms—pink jumpsuits—and none of them would be allowed in the Girl Scouts, which is a "program" and a privilege to be earned.)

Even in a Girl Scout meeting, there are very specific rules that must be followed. One girl and her mother were dismissed when the girl wore oversized boots to the meeting, which she exchanged with the mother's shoes so that the mother could wear the boots back to her wing. Everyone is suspect. A daughter, like her mother before her, could be a "mule" for drugs or other contraband. Certainly, among adults, contraband is brought into the prison in a variety of creative ways. Drugs come packed in balloons, which are carried in a visitor's mouth and "passed" in a kiss. Perhaps the balloon is swallowed, and the recipient waits until she is able to defecate it out of her system, at which time she can distribute the drugs in the population. One woman told me that she had a friend who died when a balloon she swallowed "burst," and "exploded in her heart."

The members of the Girl Scouts are particularly careful to follow every procedure properly, because they so value the time with their daughters. A child, therefore, cannot bring a gift of any kind to her mother.

I present some of their stories here, excerpted, from tape-recorded interviews. If a word has been added for clarity, parentheses are used.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM CURRY

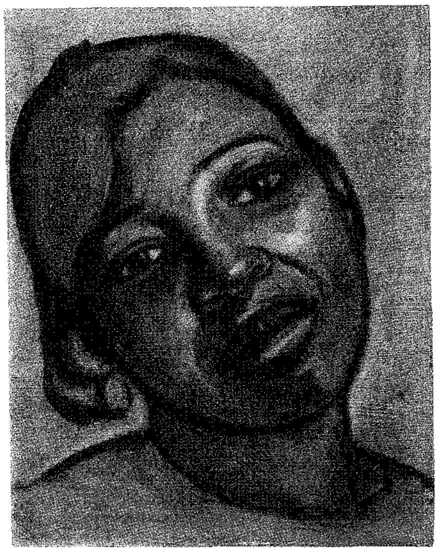
SERIOUS/WICKED WOMEN
SHERRI RIDEOUT

The Visiting Room: The room has several long institutional tables, and there are vending machines against two walls.

Sherri Rideout is tall, with pressed hair that swoops up to the side. She is, by her own definition, a compulsive thief. She comes back and forth to prison a lot. She is thirty-three. Her demeanor is pleasant and open, and she has a very apparent sense of humor. When I asked her to say something into the microphone to test the machine, she yelled, "I love ya!"

Now, I take this place seriously
even the last time when I left here
it wasn't as strict.
I left this place in '93
And two years later
My God.
This is serious here.
This is serious times.
The most serious part about it is
they have a lot a new officers
that more so are young
very young
and the younger generation to me
they can't tolerate a lot of things that
older people can.
They just cuff you
put you over
and you goin' on lock.
Unh unh.
I'm getting too old.
I'm thirty-three.
My children are getting old.
They need me.
The women, the women in this place
some of them are so evil and wicked.
Some of these women
You got people that's
took someone else's life
that's chopped their baby and fed it to
their husband
all kinds of ludicrous things
that has taken place.
And you know
they can get in here and portray
to be this and that
but I'm thinking
well my God
if you did that to your own child
what would you do to me?
To kill your child
and to do all these things?
Unh unh.
Now, there's one girl here
that committed a violent offense
and she got eighteen years for this offense
and she
when her roommate
went to sleep
she took something and shoved it up
her vagina
It's just, it's some wicked women here.
It really is.

CHRISTMAS
VERA BANTON



Vera is in prison for murder. By her account, while protecting herself from Sam, her boyfriend, who was coming at her with a steak knife and threatening to kill her, she grabbed the knife, "tousled" with him, and the knife accidentally went into his chest. She got eighteen years. She told me that when she first met Sam he told her he was an angel, and she believed him, but as he abused her she saw he was the devil. "The devil," she told me, "come as an angel, too. He was in Heaven at one time. And he also walks this earth as an angel."

Vera told me that her Christmas package had come from her family, "but there was something wrong in it," so it was sent back. She said she had decided to praise the Lord until she was "all fulled up," instead of getting angry.

This is the most painful time of the
year for me
'cause I'm in prison
I'm in this environment
Away from my family
I have four kids
out there
that I have been away now for three
years
and I miss
putting up a Christmas tree,
wrapping gifts,
going to the mall buying the gifts,
and just seeing they face,
when they open 'em up,
cookin' the dinner,
sittin' at the table,
we all saying our grace,
we all eat together,
we all go visit Grandma,
go over to Auntie house,
and just being with my kids,
I miss that.
I don't feel like Christmas!
And it's sad
because I have to go back in
past the Christmas tree
past the decorations
and go in the little room and lock in
and it hurts
'cause I didn't do those decorations
I didn't put that Christmas tree up
I don't have my kids
running around
"Mommy"
now that I have grandkids out there
I'm not able to be with them.
Christmas.

A MIRROR TO HER MOUTH
PAULETTE JENKINS

It was about 6 P.M. when I met Paulette Jenkins. It was dark outside. The visiting room was quiet. A stream of officers had just gone home. She is black, simply presented, with her hair pulled back, wearing a T-shirt. Most of her sentences end with an upward inflection, as if she knows but is still looking for something, looking for a possibility.

They were still afraid.
They were still confused.
He would beat them.
They were not his children.
I had three children before it was all
over with
but at the time we all started out it was
just
me
and my daughter
and then
I had another baby
by my husband
and I left my husband
and went with this man.
It was like jumping out of the pan and
right into the fire?
And he would beat my children,
out of his own insecurities
or his own jealousness.
He beat my daughter
and he beat my son.
My daughter was nine
and my son was six.
The beatings escalated
and I began to cover it up.
This went on for
five,
seven years
and my daughter had got a beatin' and
he had scald her foot.
I lied to Social Service and I told them
"This didn't happen. He didn't do it."
You know—
"It was an accident."
I had came home from work and she was
there with her feet all blistered up

and she told me he made her stand in the bathtub with hot water.
It was the fact,
that I didn't believe her
and even if I did believe her—
it was the fact
I hesitated.
I refused to do anything about it.
That was the fact.
It didn't take the blisters down.
It didn't change the fact that I lied to Social Service.
I denied all help and assistance.
I pushed my family away, when the abuse got so intense
that I wouldn't go visit.
I ran out of excuses!
Of how we got black eyes.
And busted lips and bruises.
And he beat me, too.
But
it didn't change the fact,
that
It was a nightmare for my children.
It was a nightmare.
And I failed them.
Dramatically.
Because I allowed it to continue.
On.
And on.
And on.

That night that she got killed—
we had went out,
And to subside my fear of being petrified
I was shootin' drugs all day long—
and was still able to cook a dinner.
You know.
(*Louder, and more emphatic.*)
Still was able to keep the house clean.
Wash clothes.
Hang 'em on the line.
And be blasted!
Heroin,
marijuana,
alcohol.
Y'know.
And then I started writing prescriptions.
Y'know.
And I thought he was gonna get better.
And I thought I could fix this man!
And the intensity just grew,
and grew,
and grew,
until one night we came home . . .
from getting drugs,
and he
got angry with Myeshia,
and he started beating her,
he would use a belt,
'cause he had this warped
perverted thing,
that Myeshia
was having sex with her little brother
or that they were fondlin' each other.
And he beat her
and he put her in the bathtub
and I was in the bedroom.
But
before
all this happened,
four months before she died,
I thought I could really fix this man
and so I had a baby by him!
Insane?!
Thinking if I give him his own kid,
he'll leave mine alone.
But it didn't work—
I wound up with three children—
and it was a boy
four months old when I came to jail.
So,
the night that Myeshia died
I stayed in the bedroom with the baby.
And every time he would hit her
she would fall,
and she would hit her head on the tub.
I could hear it!
And it happened continuously,
repeatedly.
(*She whispers.*)
And I dared not to move.
I didn't move.
I didn't even go see what was happening.
I just set there and listened.
And then later—
he set her in the hallway
and told her to set there.
And she set there for 'bout
four or five hours
and then he told her to get up
(*She starts to cry, her voice is very soft*)
and when she got up
she said she couldn't see
(*She cries*)
her face was bruised
(*She is whispering*)
and she had a black eye.
All around her head was just swollen.
Her head looked like it was two sizes
of its own size.
I told him to let her go to sleep,
and he let her go to sleep.
(*She is whispering.*)
The next morning
she was dead.
He went and checked on her
for school.
And he got very excited.
He said,
"She won't breathe."
I knew immediately that she was dead.
(*She is crying.*)
So I went in
I didn't want to accept the fact that she was dead.
So I went and took a mirror to her mouth.
There was no—thing
coming out of her mouth,
nothing.
He said,
"We cannot let nobody know about this.
So you got to help me."
So I agreed.
I agreed.
(*She is crying.*)
We waited that whole day.
She stayed in that room that whole day.
With no medical attention.
I didn't dare tell anyone.
'Cause I had been keeping it a secret for years and years.
And this just seemed like secondhand to me.
To keep a secret.
That night,
we went to the mall
and we told the
security guards in the mall
that she had been missing
that we had, like, lost her.
You know, we fabricated the story
and I went along with it.
And we told them
what she had on.
That night.
We got her dressed.
In—the—exact—same—thing,
that we told the police that she had on.
And we got the baby.
And my other son.
And we drove
like out to
I-95,
I was so petrified
and so numb
All I could look,
was in the rearview mirror
and he just laid her on the shoulder
of the highway.
My own child
I let that happen to.
The six-year-old,
he
was scared.
He was scared.
It was like livin' in a haunted house
for years and years.
She got killed on the fourth of March,
and no later than the sixth
they had found her and it was over with.
We had told the media that she was missing
'cause he was like—
"Well, why don't you just go on and tell 'em that she's missing?"
I confessed to everything
I plead guilty.
I took twenty-five on a plea bargain.
He took

sixty on a plea bargain.
Myeshia's birthday was December the 6th.
She would have been nineteen.

A Sam Shepardesque “Fool for Love” Kind of Story

Sherri Rideout

And one time—
And he used to gamble—
Compulsive.
He was a compulsive gambler
and I was a compulsive thief—
And
Tell you what!
My baby
was in the baby crib
'bout two months old
and he had a gun in the baby thing
and I didn't know it was in the baby thing
and he came home
running
Dumped the baby over!
This is how crazy this man was!
Could have hurt the baby!
And took the gun out and ran out the door.
I been through something!
I been through something with that man.
And then one time
me and him was in a motel room?
And he accused me of talking to some guy?
And he said that he was gon kill me
I said “Go 'head!
Go—'head—and—kill—me!
Go 'head!
I ain't no good anyway!
I ain't no good!
You wanna kill something that ain't no good!
Go 'head and kill it!”
Then he didn't kill me.
Then.
We was at this other motel one time.
And it was snow on the ground.
It was snow on the ground.
We was in the motel room.
He talkin' about he seen me talking to this guy.
He know the guy want me and all this crazy stuff.
He told me,
“Come on
This is it!
This is it!
You gon die tonight.”
He said, “I'm gon take me a shower
and after that you gon die.”
I was strip naked in the motel room.
I ran out the motel room
butterball naked in the snow
with nothing on
to get away from this man.
He had a gun in there!
(*She is laughing.*)
He had a gun!
Oh, man!
Coming to jail
coming in these rooms
and telling people
about what
all he used to do to me
and how I used to let him get away with it,
how he would be with all these women
and they said,
“Stop letting him run free in your own head!”
And how he still was
trying to say things
and scare me in some ways.
Eight years
me and this man was together
'cause 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24
Nine years.

Integration

The broad part of the prison population is called “population.” Those women who accumulate a certain number of “tickets” for disobeying rules are placed on “segregation.” Claudia McClain and Tyboria Stones have both been confined to segregation for substantial periods of time.

Tyboria Stones

Tyboria is twenty-six and was charged with raping a woman. She says she didn't do it. (“Why would I want to go out and do something to an old woman like that? When I have a woman?”) She is stocky and muscular, with hair trimmed very close on the sides, short and curly on top.

I was in a single room.
They said nobody couldn't be my roommate
and the officers making a big thing of it
saying we're gonna put a little boy in your room
we ain't puttin' a fem in your room.
A fem
a straight woman.
You know they talking
about a little
boy. . . .
They call us
little boys
'cause we dress like men.
Our hair be like men.
We wear men cologne.
And I think that's wrong.
Saying,
“Don't nobody wanta be Tyboria's roommate,”
you know . . .
They don't know nothing about it. . . .
And I had that
I don't care attitude
just keep getting tickets
and getting tickets
and it was like a lot of officers kept bothering me
officer throwing piss un'neath my door.
The officers don't want me in population.

Ping-Pong Table

Tyboria came with a history of violence from inside institutions as well as out on the street. She described a run-in with a warden at another facility.

The warden . . .
hit me upside the head,
'cause I wouldn't take off a stocking cap.
And I hit him back
and
I threw him on the Ping-Pong table
in the rec area
and I started chokin' him
punchin' him back
and we got to fightin'
and the backups came in and put shackles on me
and cuffs
and he came in the isolation room
and tried to choke me
and they left me in there for two days with the
shackles on and the cuffs on from behind.

When I Was About Six or Seven

I asked her where she thinks her violence comes from.

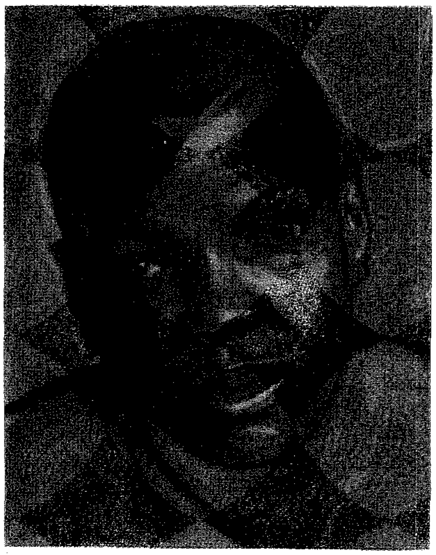
I don't know why I was into a lot of violence
I don't know.
'Cause um

I have a nice mother.
I have a real respectful mother.

Q: What about your father?

My father was a very violent person.
My mother was telling me
he always stayed in jail
for assault and batteries.
He shot this woman
he shot her in her stuff
in her vagina
'cause he found her in bed
with another man.
He had left my mother.
It happened when I was about six or seven.

CLAUDIA McCLAIN



Claudia came to the interview with a sense of purpose, sitting behind the microphone in a formal manner. She is twenty-one years old, and she looks tough, like a bullet. Her head is shaved nearly bald. From a distance she looks like a boy. This is by design.

On the streets, she lived, as she said, "on the edges." She was a drug dealer. She is in prison for shooting Diko, a friend who sold drugs for her, when they were both teenagers. By her account, he had thirteen hundred dollars of hers and refused to give it back. She says Diko drew out his gun and pulled the trigger, but nothing came out. In response, she shot him six times, twice in his head and "the rest" in his upper body.

I mean,
I don't care if Warden Carter reads about this—
I mean right is right
and wrong is wrong.
Segregation inmates . . .
You get handcuffed
and locked in a cage.
Like you're really an animal.
Since he (*Warden Carter*)
has been here
you get three showers (*a week*).
Now,
what if a woman is menustratin'?
Three showers?
What is that?
And then if a shower happens to fall on a day of a holiday
you can't come and take a shower
You don't get rec and showers on a holiday.
They have so many holidays
while I was in segregation.
Holidays that didn't speak in the calendar.
If they walk in today and don't feel like
showerin' you
'cause today is Wednesday
and shower day
they say it's a holiday.
And you look on your calendar or holler out the window
'cause you see the general population
on a working schedule
and you ask them is it a holiday.
And they say no.
The officer say
it doesn't matter
I say it's a holiday.

It makes you feel unclean.
'Cause
small as the sink
is you not gonna get clean.
Just a little strip a water comes
it comes like this.
(*She demonstrates an arc, slowly, with her hand, making eye contact with me. Her look is stern.*)

JUST PLAYIN'

We got to arguin'
me and Diko
so he brought out a gun on me
and said,
"I ain't givin' you shit."
All I seen was a gun and I seen my life flash before me
but each day as I think more and more about the situation
you know I'm sayin?
Although he pulled the trigger
and nothing came out
maybe he knew it was blanks in there.
Maybe he was just playin'.

NO LONGER LOVERS

I asked her who called the police on her.

Someone living upstairs on the third floor.
This female I used to socialize with
intimately
sexually.
We was no longer lovers though.
One day I come in
and seen her throw something
and my instincts was to see what it was
it was a spike (*a needle*)
and I don't subject myself to that.
I do not involve myself in drugs
I mean usin'.
I don't do drugs.
I don't do alcohol.
So.
I left.

Q: And she didn't like that.

CLAUDIA: I guess not.

PRETTY TEETH

(*She sits closer to the microphone and increases her volume.*)

This is on the record!
We had one girl
she has abscesses and
infections in her mouth.
And this other girl here
she just caught hepatitis.
And you know hepatitis could go away
or you could live with that
for the rest of your life.
But see I have pretty teeth
so I don't have to worry.
(*She smiles, baring her teeth. They are quite pretty.*)

THE TOUR OF SEGREGATION
LIEUTENANT SOMERVILLE-JONES

The Lieutenant is an attractive black woman who "loves her job." She has been at M.C.I.W. for nine years. Our first stop is the segregation wing. The officer on duty is a large black woman with small black glasses. Her uniform is not clean. She is wearing a small black knit ski cap. She is the keeper of the hall. The women are locked into rooms with brown doors that are controlled electronically. There is a small, thick glass window on each door. There is a slot the size of a small food tray a little below waist high. If the slot is opened, the women can talk through it. Otherwise, they communicate by yelling at the top of their lungs or screaming to each other through the vents. The rooms have a toilet, a bed, and very little else. The officer seems in good spirits, and so does Lieutenant Somerville-Jones. As the women realize that she has entered, they start to scream. They all have requests. One needs a cigarette, one needs to see the doctor, another has a grievance about an officer, etc. I was surprised at how quickly the entire wing realized that the Lieutenant was there. And I was stunned when they realized she had a visitor.

Lt. S.-J. and I stoop down to the slot in order to talk. The woman we talk to is sitting with her face at the slot. She is a light-

skinned black woman. She begins to talk as if she had a very important role in a play or pageant.

I wan tell you . . .
What I want to say is
That things here
Bein' here at this institution
There's a lot of things
that's not supposed to be done!
Far as like
the way we are being treated here—
like animals!
We get treated like animals!
As for the uh
the hygienes
your hygienes . . .
I been on lock
for two years and ten
months
in segregation . . .
These—officers—
they—egg—us—on
they—lie—on—us . . .
And you don't get showers every day here
you get showers three times a week
on segregation.

WITHIN THESE FENCES
TERRI

Terri is the only white woman I interviewed. She preferred not to use her real name. She is composed and well spoken, has sparkling blue eyes, and is immaculately groomed. She has a life sentence.

Every single morning
when I go to work,
you can see this fire in the sky,
and I think of my grandmother and my grandfather.
And also the birds!
When I hear the birds chirping
I think of my grandmother
who I always thought was an angel.
She would always feed the birds
from her balcony
throwing bread crumbs
so there are things
within these fences
that remind
me of good memories
and loved ones from the past.

HOPPERS

You know the housing unit I live on is the pits
A
Wing
You have all the
maximum security inmates
and it's where you have all the ticket maxes
people that constantly stay in trouble
that are on and off of lock.
So they have all the misfits
and outcasts
that they can't control
They're just loud
They're obnoxious
and just downright disgusting
They're hoppers.
They're buck wild.
Sometimes I have to laugh at 'em.
There are people who have been here a long time
that have a lot of time
they aren't troublesome people
they don't get into trouble
they don't look for trouble
they don't follow trouble
and they stay out of trouble
I don't think it's fair that they keep them on A Wing
with all the misfits
and the ticket maxes
and all the trouble
I mean we
have to be here
and we're gonna be here for a while
for now we have to be here
and we have to make the best of a bad situation
I'm trying to live
as normal a life
as I can possibly live
by getting up every morning
and going to work
and just
and coming in and gettin' your shower
and maybe going to dinner and going to school
and then in hopes
of quiet time for an hour
and then getting up and doing it all over again
and I just think it's so unfair
that I have to be in an environment like that.

OFFICER ON DUTY

Warden Carter told me that in 1939, when the prison was built, it was racially segregated, and there "was a handful—maybe twenty" women. The officers were called matrons. There were no security fences until the late sixties.

Lt. S.-J. and I walked around the grounds (called the campus). It was snow-covered and looked exactly like a college, with red brick buildings spaced apart. She yelled out to another officer who had agreed to go pick up her mother, since she'd be staying late with me. That's exactly the Baltimore I remember, a community where folks did favors for one another all the time. Inside these fences, however, a favor for the inmates was loaded. And a favor between officers and inmates could be a disaster. Lt. S.-J. had a kind of confidence about her relationship with the women. I asked her what the crux of it was. "They know I'm fair," she said.

I learned from her that it is often unclear how long a "life sentence" actually is.

SIX NUMBERS
LT. SOMERVILLE-JONES

I can't
judge somebody else
that's what I had to learn
about working in a prison.
I had a problem dealing with the crimes that these people had committed.
I was bothered by child murderers.
But I had to do some soul-searching.
Our job is not to judge anybody.
No one can ever say what they won't do.
Because you don't know what a person goes through.
Everyone here has six numbers.
There's no big crime
and there's no little crime.
There's no black crime.
There's no white crime.
Not everybody in here is a criminal.
You have people here who have done some horrendous things
and they deserve to be here.
But
let's say
last night
when the weather was real bad.
And you go up here to 175.
And you look left and right.
You don't see anything.
You pull out.
You hit a car.
And you kill a little old lady.
You're coming to jail for vehicular manslaughter.
So does that make you a criminal?
You have a lot of tragedies here.
I mean
to me
all of 'em is tragedies
especially
the teen-agers.
I mean
high-school kids
who had lives
and now they have six numbers.
I'm a Baptist.
I believe in God
and I pray
I pray for the girls every night
on my knees.
Yes I do.
I ask Him to bless everybody
and
let So-and-So get through this time.
And what I want to know is,
how long is life? ◆

ONWARD AND UPWARD WITH THE ARTS

IS THE MUSE DEAD?

She who once inspired great art, and even not so great art, today hides her face.

BY ARLENE CROCE

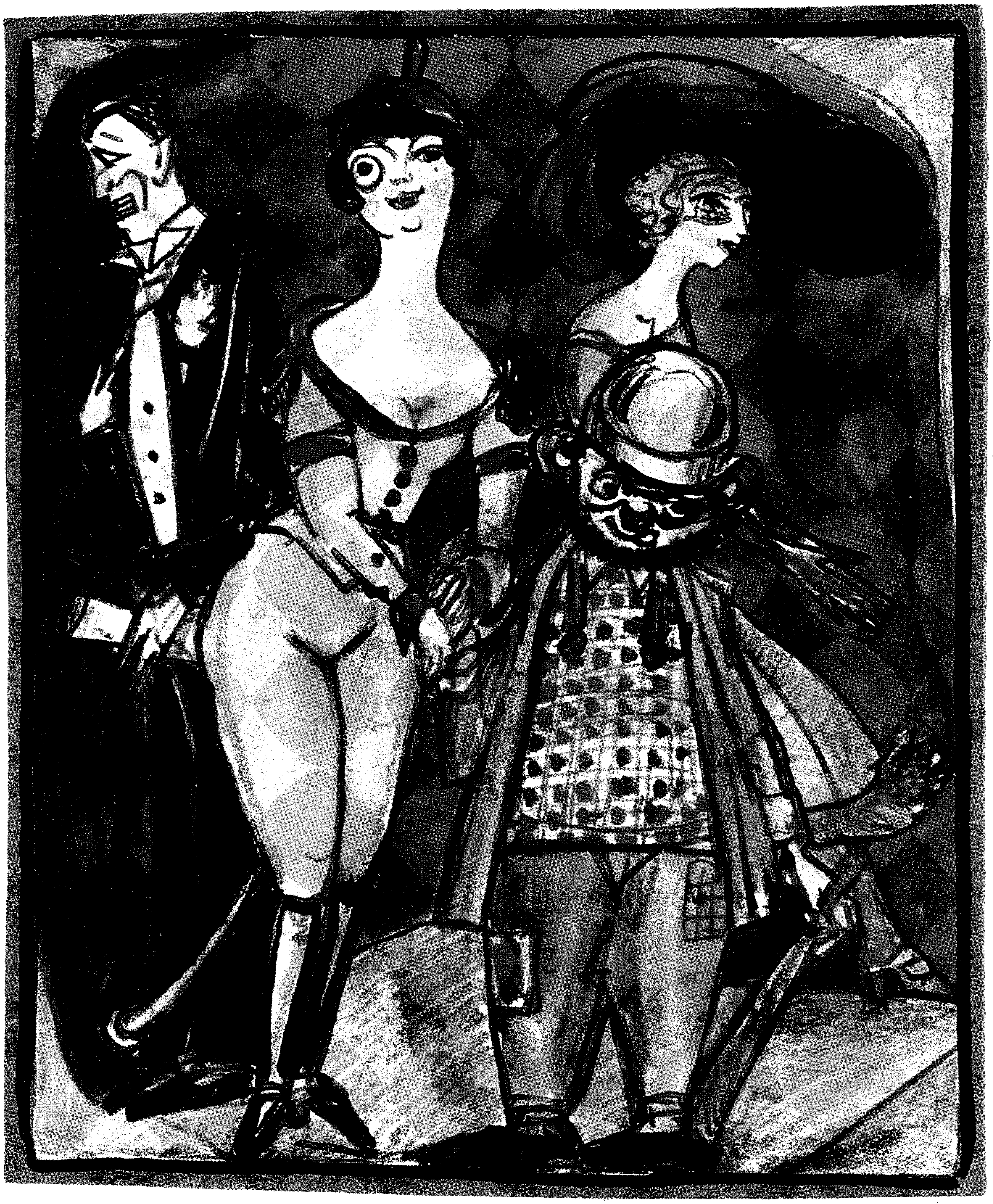
IN 1987, the public's favorite American realist painter, Andrew Wyeth, gave the public its favorite Wyeth show, a show that consisted entirely of paintings of one woman, known only as Helga. In terms of publicity and in terms of box-office, the show was a bonanza; it was right up there with Tutankhamun's gold and Andy Warhol's cookie jars. The identity of Helga was not exactly a secret, but most people knew only that she was not Wyeth's wife. (Insiders assumed that Wyeth's wife, who was also his agent, had cooked up the show.) Whoever Helga was, whatever role she played in Wyeth's life—mistress, long-lost love, dead daughter, girl next door—the public eagerly accepted her in the only role it cared about: she was the Muse. And she was what the public thought Muses looked like. Alex Katz's Ada could never have attracted as much attention, but then neither could Dali's Gala. Helga had Nordic cheekbones and an impassive Nordic manner; she intersected nicely with Jessica Lange and other female idols of the movies and TV, and at the same time corrected them: she was plainer, sturdier, someone with values.

Wyeth's Helga is today a distant memory, not because she was basically a kitsch creation but because she was the last large-scale manifestation of the Muse in our culture, and Muses are not wanted anymore. Today, Helga would have to be publicized as an artist in her own right. It wouldn't be enough for her personality to be defined by Wyeth's portraits, or for her mystery to stem solely from her relation to him; she'd have to be a legend apart from him, someone like Frida Kahlo and Anaïs Nin, who weren't "mere" Muses. It's only in the perspective of the last two hundred years that Helga can hope to justify herself as a symbol, and then, kitsch or no, be seen in her true light as inspiratrix.

Muses are born, not made, and that's part of the reason they are disappearing. Some are born with talent, some not, but all Muses must possess two qualities, beauty and mystery, and of the two mystery is the greater. Somehow or other, the woman must be able to impel the artist toward the goal of creation; she must be good for the art. Happy marriages crash and bad ones are sustained on this alone. The much married Balanchine preferred young girls he could mold into stars before they were out of their teens, and in this he was being faithful both to the chivalric tradition of Muse worship and to the vocation of dance, in which talent shows itself early. Though the chivalric tradition requires virginity or at least modesty in the woman, there is a subtradition that honors promiscuity: the woman who has had many men can be as mysterious, and her demands as gratifying, as the pure young girl. This Lou Andreas-Salomé/Alma Mahler Gropius Werfel-style Muse flourished around the end of the last century in the decadent atmosphere of Art Nouveau and the Viennese Secession. Since Poe and Baudelaire, there has also been the poète maudit and the mystique of the corrupt virgin. The Salomes—of Klimt, Moreau, Mallarmé, and Wilde—belong to this mystique; so does Nabokov's "Lolita," the only modern-day Muse drama that deserves to stand beside Balanchine's ballets.

Throughout history, the changing image of the Muse has reflected changes in sexual behavior and in the status of women, but the process by which the art comes into being is always sublimation. The love that the artist feels for the woman becomes spiritual: a dream of Eros, a vision. On its highest plane, where sublimation results in art that is itself sublime, the vision moves historically in cycles. Two hundred years ago, the early German Romantics infected all Europe with the idea of divine inspiration, which they had revived from the Platonic revival of the Renaissance. That's three cycles, and a fourth occurred just a hundred years ago, with the emergence of Symbolism from Romanticism. It is remarkable that the two most recent cycles were fin-de-siècle movements, each coinciding with an age of revolution. Let the French and the Russian Revolutions stand as gateposts—one to the nine-

ABOVE: GENE FENN, COURTESY OF ROBERT CRAFT; OPPOSITE: SERGEI SUDEIKIN, COURTESY OF ROBERT CRAFT



Vera Stravinsky was the Muse to her fourth husband, Igor (opposite). In a painting of her by her third husband, Sergei Sudeikin, he depicted himself as the dwarf sweeping away his former Muse, Olga Glebova.

teenth century, one to the twentieth. Let our own era of bloodless revolution—the sweeping away of Communist tyrannies and, within the democracies, the march toward equal rights for minorities and women—stand as the counterpart to those previous turn-of-the-century eras of social convulsion in which the Muse reawoke to a new life, and what do we see? Not a changed Muse, not a socially constructive Muse, but no Muse at all. We neither feel her influence nor see her face.

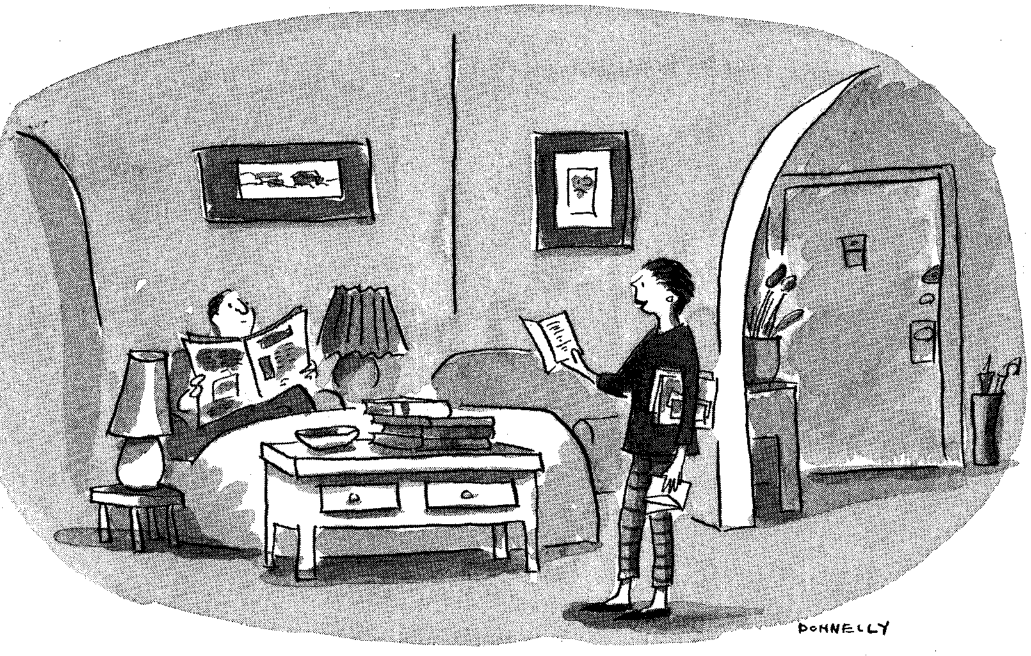
Like Nekrasov, who said, "I'd rather be a citizen than a poet," today's woman says, "I'd rather be a citizen than a Muse." We know the arguments: Muses are passive, therefore passé. Muses are a fantasy rooted in wrongheaded notions of biological "essentialism" (i.e., femininity). Most degradingly, Muses do not choose to be Muses; they are chosen. Since the nineteen-seventies, modern feminism has based its appeal to women on the premise that all barriers to the dream of self-realization are political. Whatever can't be acquired for oneself, invoking one's civil rights, isn't worth having, and who wants to be a symbol, anyway? The Muse is only a man speaking through a woman, not the woman herself. What male artists call Woman is a construct designed to keep real women in their place.

The paradox in all this is that whenever a gifted male artist has embraced his Muse he has in fact made a woman appear in the art, because he has voluntarily embraced the woman in himself. The oft-cited example of Picasso and his wives-mistresses-models is not one that I would choose myself: Balthus is so much better. Joyce's Molly Bloom, Strauss's Marschallin, Berg's Lulu, Tennessee Williams' Blanche DuBois—all so much better. And yet the paradigm of these conceptions remains Picasso's wondrous painting "Girl Before a Mirror"—a case of the painter apprehending the Muse apprehending herself. These male artists have nothing in common except that each has been able to put himself in his female subject's place, look in the mirror, and describe what he saw. It is not the man speaking through the woman; it is the woman speaking through the man.

As the creations of men, Lolita and Balanchine's ballerinas seem to me so utterly miraculous that I would like to think of them as anomalies, in a category of their own. But in fact their subtlety and irony depend on that "essentialism" which modern feminists decry in the idea of the Muse. Nabokov's Lolita needs the old Symbolist visions of damnation to be fully appreciated: she is the temptress in a new guise, the teen-ager with the dirty smile on the cover of *Life*. (I mean *Life* then, not now.) No woman could have created Lolita, and no woman could have created Balanchine's choreography, yet it was so transparent that his women seemed to materialize individually under their own power. The paradoxicality, the impossibility of the illusion is the measure of Balanchine's genius. Ballet is an essentialist art form! No woman could have done what Balanchine did and no other man, either.

The Olympian male imagination will always do more for the woman than she would do for herself. What Balanchine and Nabokov both seem to have understood was that the Muse's hour was coming around again, in mid-century America, and she herself was to be the subject of the drama. As Russians, they also understood something about American girls that American artists hadn't even tried to find out, so busy were they trying to impress the ghost of Henry James. Nabokov and Balanchine didn't care about acquiring that kind of Europe-centered cultural respectability; they had all they needed, and they had the something extra that came from having been born in Russia at a time of enormous consequence to the arts.

NABOKOV, Balanchine, and their older compatriot Igor Stravinsky, all three American citizens, were emissaries of what Solomon Volkov, in "St. Petersburg: A Cultural History," terms Petersburg modernism—the expression of new ideas in literature, philosophy, and the arts which had been gathering force since the death of Tchaikovsky, in 1893, and which reached its peak in the nineteen-tens—the so-called Silver Age of Russian art. Until the Communists destroyed it, this was Russia's strongest link to world culture, its about-to-be great moment on the world's stage. It did literally appear on the stage in Paris, as Serge Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, sending shock waves into every corner of Europe and the Americas, but ballet was only the most spectacular of Russia's treasures. And the most ephemeral. Forced by the Revolution to remain abroad, Diaghilev's company became Franco-Russian. As a homosexual, Diaghilev was more comfortable openly fostering a homosexual cult of ballet in Paris than he had been at home. Petersburg modernism was not anti-homosexual, but it saw the love of women



"You don't have to go to this party. It's 'Men Optional.'"

as crucial to the theme of good and evil in Western art, and that was the theme Diaghilev presented in his initial seasons, with some necessary emphasis, of course, on evil ("Cléopâtre," "Thamar"). The Russians did not shrink from manifestations of the sublime. They were in love with God, in love with form, with divine discipline. For them, aestheticism was religion, not a religious feeling, and it covered every aspect of life. In Russian artistic circles, women were apostrophized as Muses and courted by poets, painters, and musicians; cathedrals were favorite trysting places. Alexander Blok's "Beautiful Lady" and Osip Mandelstam's "blessed ladies" were variations on the theme of Hagia Sophia (Holy Wisdom), perceived as the feminine deity St. Cyril had dreamed of in the third century. Women's names were numinous. Blok's wife was a Liubov (love), Mandelstam's a Nadezhda (hope). Stravinsky and Nabokov both married women named Vera (faith); the same name in Russian, with one consonant added, is Venus (Vera, Venera; Mrs. Nabokov used the French acute "e").

Vera was Stravinsky's second wife and, it seems safe to say, his only Muse. He had originally married his first cousin and closest woman friend, Catherine Nossenko, and with her had raised a family. Around 1923, at just about the time his compositional style was moving toward neoclassicism, Vera became the center of Stravinsky's life. She was a tall, lustrous brunette, generously proportioned, soft-spoken and tranquil. The score of "Apollo" bears a famous dedication with a pun on the name Vera: "Voici cet 'Apollon' dit 'Musagète,' c.à d. qui amène la Musa Ver'igor." ("Here is this Apollo called Leader of the Muses, that is to say the one who brings the Muse Ver'igor," or "the one who brings the Muse to Igor.")

Vera Stravinsky died in New York in 1982, eleven years after the composer. He was her fourth husband. Two brief early marriages to nonartists were followed by a longer one to the painter Sergei Sudeikin. A memorial to Petersburg modernism has recently been published in the form of a facsimile of the salon album kept by Vera Sudeikina from 1916 to 1923: "The Salon Album of Vera Sudeikin-Stravinsky," edited and translated by John E. Bowlt. Filled with paintings, drawings, poems, and salutations by the Sudeikins and their guests, the album is a register of the personalities and a record of the friendships that defined artistic life in the then capital of Russia and in the Crimea, Tiflis, and Baku, where the Sudeikins were driven by the civil war on their way to live as exiles in Paris. There Sudeikin, who knew Diaghilev, introduced him to his wife, and Diaghilev in 1921 introduced her to Stravinsky. Boris Kochno, soon to become Diaghilev's right-hand man, in another of Vera's albums hailed her as "the Muse of Muses." From the bounteous tributes reproduced in the facsimile (her patronymic, Arturovna, is twice converted to "Augustovna," and Mikhail Kuzmin, using Sudeikin's pet names for her, addresses her as "Donna Anna, oh my Venus"), it would appear that her preëminence was a recognized fact.

Professor Bowlt, whose translations and annotations are a feat of scholarship, writes that the tradition of the Artist and His Muse was an old theme of Russian art that had been revived by the World of Art group led by Diaghilev and Alexandre Benois. This conscious cultivation of an attitude would explain how homosexual artists like Kuzmin could subscribe to it; worship of the female image can be a conscious aesthetic held by some homosexual men, and more than an aesthetic, too. Sudeikin was bisexual. As a painter, he doted on the artifice and theatricality of World of Art taste—its fetishistic harlequins and puppets and its storytelling Schumannesque masks. He later became the favorite scenic designer of Nikita Baliev, the producer of the international revue Chauve-Souris. As for Vera, who was also a painter and had been an actress, the part of Muse came easily, though even she found it necessary to set down some rules:

1. Force the artist to work, even with a stick.
2. Love his work no less than him.
3. Welcome every burst of creative energy. Kindle him with new ideas.
4. Keep the main works and the drawings, sketches, and caricatures in order. Know each work, its scheme and meaning.
5. Relate to new works as if they were surprise gifts.
6. Know how to look at a painting for hours on end.
7. Be physically perfect and, therefore, his model forever.

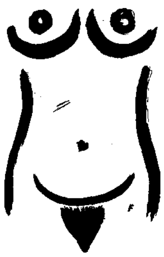
"You are a limitless source of life," Sudeikin wrote her in return. She could cook, too.

The Muse's workload increases when there is no money in the house—when, as was the case during the years of Vera's marriage to Sudeikin, there was revolution and war and famine. In her diary for 1917, Vera records how Mandelstam came visiting and she hid from him the meat patty she was saving for Sudeikin. The two poems that Mandelstam inscribed to her are among his most famous, although it is difficult for anyone who does not read Russian to tell why. Russian poetry translates painfully into English. If it hadn't been for Vladimir Nabokov, whose first language happened to be English, we would have no idea of the literary genius of the Silver Age. And if it hadn't been for Véra Nabokov, who facilitated his every move, it is doubtful whether Nabokov could have performed as he did, a one-man Russian university.

From Nabokov's essays and lectures and from his instructive quarrels with Edmund Wilson, we learned to think of a Revolutionary-era Russian art that was not all left-leaning vanguard experiment. But, whether the artists were right, left, or center, they all seem to have had Muses. Vladimir Mayakovsky, the Bolsheviks' No. 1 poet, had his Lily Brik (whose sister, Elsa Triolet, lived with Louis Aragon). Professor Bowlt quotes a passage from Vera Sudeikina's diary in which she describes herself sitting by a window painting, aware that all up and down the canals of the city other artists are painting, writing, composing. It was a period of intense communication among the arts; of artists' cabarets and artists' balls; and of great diversity of expression. Everybody acted, sang, danced; poets painted, painters wrote poems. Life was a masquerade, with identities drawn from characters in books or operas. You could do yourself up as Carmen and go marketing.

Sudeikin's preferred way of painting Vera was as an odalisque, wearing a turban. His previous wife, Olga Glebova, also a beauty, had her own style. Physically and temperamentally Vera's opposite, she was, in Andrey Bely's description, "a fragile, young, charming blonde . . . chirping intelligently like a little bird." Glebova's career as a Muse, even after she was upstaged by Vera, was central to the Petersburg mythos. She was adored by Blok, among many others. Photographs of Glebova as a dancer, wearing Sudeikin's costumes, appear in Vera's album. This was a woman whom Anna Akhmatova considered the embodiment of feminine perfection, her favorite among the many female "doubles" (as she called them) with whom she kept company. A bond between Glebova and the poet was the fact that they had both been in love with Sudeikin and had lost him to Vera. To Glebova she also lost the composer Arthur Lourié and then Vsevolod Kniazev, a handsome young officer and poet who had attracted Sudeikin and Kuzmin, who had been involved with each other.

The sexual entanglements of these people make Bloomsbury look decorous, and they are marked by personal tragedy and public catastrophe: Kniazev's suicide, Blok's early death in the same month that Nicolai Gumilyov, Akhmatova's former husband, was executed by the Bolsheviks, Mandelstam's death in the gulag, the persecution of Akhmatova and her family by the Soviet regime, fouler and more persistent than its persecution of Boris Pasternak. As the survivors of the Silver Age grew older and their existence was increasingly marginalized by officialdom, they practiced a form of oral history, committing their poetry and the story of their lives to as many memories as could be trusted, and the biographies became even more entangled. Whether or not Mandelstam ever fell in love with Akhmatova (Nadezhda was never sure), she claimed that he did. Her personal attachments all counted in her art. For her, too, Glebova was the Muse Incarnate; Akhmatova never doubted that she was entitled to worship the same Muse who came to men. She put the question to Dante's Muse and got an answer—*ya*. And she herself was Muse to so many others. Her "doubles" seem to have functioned as a necessary distancing mechanism, letting her see herself more clearly. Clarity—the virtue that Kuzmin championed in his treatise on Acmeism—is *claritas*, lucidity; without it there is no poetry, just as without objectivity self-study degenerates into narcissism (something Anaïs Nin never knew). Virginia Woolf also magnetized women. But on the Muse question Bloomsbury is resolutely unmagical. Lydia Lopukhova, who was as charming offstage as she was on, was another Silver Age emissary to the West. When she married John Maynard Keynes, she was instantly adopted by the group—but as a mascot, not a Muse. The British-college-boy homosexuality of the men and the feminism of the women precluded any such nonsense.



Can a woman artist have a Muse? Plato called Sappho the Tenth Muse and let it go at that. It is fashionable to think that for Virginia Woolf the answer was bisexuality: to love the Muse the woman must become a man, or at any rate run her life with the freedom and independence of a man, which means that she require from society the right to do so. If the Muse is that dream of Eros which inspires art, and if the woman artist is as possessed by worldly ambition as she is by the dream, then there is probably no alternative to bisexuality. But there is much in Woolf's writing to suggest that for her, as for Akhmatova, a more relaxed and direct solution lay in the natural solidarity of women. It is possible to rule out Vita in favor of Vanessa as Virginia's Muse. Vanessa was Virginia's sister, and an artist and a mother. That may mean nothing, or it may mean that sisterhood as a resource for a woman artist is underexplored. Akhmatova could say, "The Muse, my sister," but Woolf never wrote about Shakespeare's sister's sister, and the recent flap in England over whether or not Jane Austen was a lesbian because she loved her sister Cassandra turned up no leads.

The Muse is easier to call up and celebrate in a language that assigns gender to nouns than in one that does not. English resists Muse worship, as Dante Gabriel Rossetti proved. One has to go back to Wordsworth and Keats to find authentic Muse music, or to the Irish—Yeats and Joyce—whose passion for language and purposeful connection to classical models obliterated all restraints. Robert Graves was the most Muse-conscious of modern poets, but his campaign on behalf of the White Goddess had no effect except on his own work. Graves, who seems so Celtic, was half German and so, perhaps, not typical of English-language poets. On the other hand, Alexander Blok was also part German *and* the most influential of Russian poets in this century. Blok's belief in the Muse Incarnate, which came to him from the German as well as from the Russian mystical philosophers, does not have to be adopted wholesale for art to live. ("Lucy" was Wordsworth's name for the feminine spirit within him, not a person who really existed.) But when the Muse is merely an abstract or fictitious concept, not even women's art prospers.

The idea that the Muse is someone you meet in real life goes back to Homeric times and has existed within the span of living memory. I have mentioned Balanchine. By the time his cult of the Muse came to wide public attention, which was not until the middle nineteen-sixties, it had begun to seem quaint—there were only Ingmar Bergman's actresses to help shore it up—and the notoriety of "Lolita" (middle-aged man loves young girl) had placed it under suspicion. The Muse Incarnate is devastating to modern feminism, since the woman does not choose but is chosen: *la demoiselle élue*. But if the man is religious, and Balanchine certainly was, he will believe that the woman was chosen by God; he will even resist making a choice until the inevitable is forced upon him. The rest of what happens has been described by Robert Graves:

> A Muse-poet falls in love, absolutely, and his true love is for him the embodiment of the Muse. As a rule, the power of absolutely falling in love soon vanishes; and, as a rule, because the woman feels embarrassed by the spell she exercises over her poet-lover and repudiates it. . . . But the real, perpetually obsessed Muse-poet distinguishes between the Goddess as manifest in the supreme power, glory, wisdom and love of woman, and the individual woman whom the Goddess may make her instrument for a month, a year, seven years, or even more. The Goddess abides; and perhaps he will again have knowledge of her through his experience of another woman.

If the Muse is dead, it is not the feminists alone who have killed her. As this century passes away into the next, it will be seen, I think, how the popularization of psychiatric notions of the unconscious has undermined the social and therapeutic function of art. Freud I think of as a poet, but the effect of his influence has been to set psychology in place of poetry, and psychology isolates, even alienates, each human soul from its fellows, whereas poetry does the opposite. Like

"I don't know about you guys, but I don't feel like I've lost one goddam bit of my femininity."

• •

the idea of the Muse Incarnate, the idea of the anima is centuries older than Jung—it is probably the oldest idea in the history of art—but, again, psychology has rendered a poetic conception unnecessarily difficult by making it abstract. Artists have generally throughout history believed that the creative faculty was feminine in nature. "Of the three modes of human activity," Auden said, "labor is sexless, fabrication feminine, and action masculine." By taking political action, feminists move into the masculine sphere. It is in this sense that the female artist becomes conclusively bisexual; experiencing sex with another woman is actually less compromising than borrowing psychic energy from the anima.

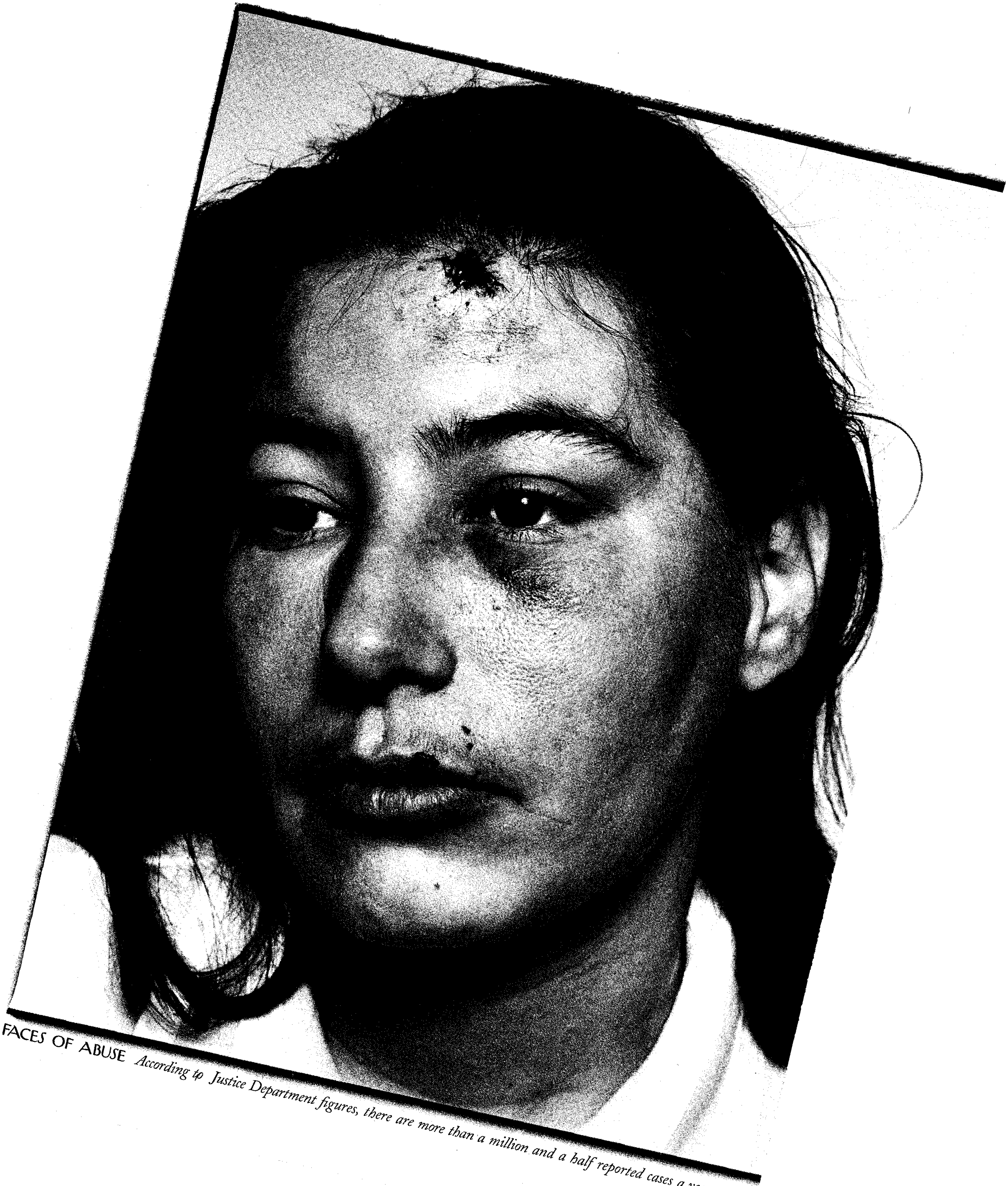
Moreover, in the richest periods of art, when artists have believed that the "she"—anima, femina, Magic Beloved—actually existed in the flesh, they have felt within themselves glimmerings of the richness and vitality of every previous period. The Muse Incarnate returns at such times, with the glories of her past lives upon her. She comes out of the sea, out of the womb of time, scattering rose petals and apple blossoms, smiling her mystical smile. In the diorama of Western art, we see her influence at peak periods: in the Middle Ages, as the patroness of the great cathedral builders and the Provençal poets; as Beatrice and Laura, Renaissance reconceptions of antiquity's Corinnas and Cynthias; as the Mona Lisa; as Botticelli's Venus and Primavera (the same model posed for both). She is Shakespeare's whole galaxy of women and part of the Elizabethan world view: Elizabeth, Virgin Queen, Heaven's regent, symbol of the State, and Protectress of the Arts. John Donne mourned her death in the form of a funerary ode to a young woman he had never met, whose name was also Elizabeth:

> She, she is dead; she's dead; when thou knowst this
> Thou knowst how dry a cinder this world is.

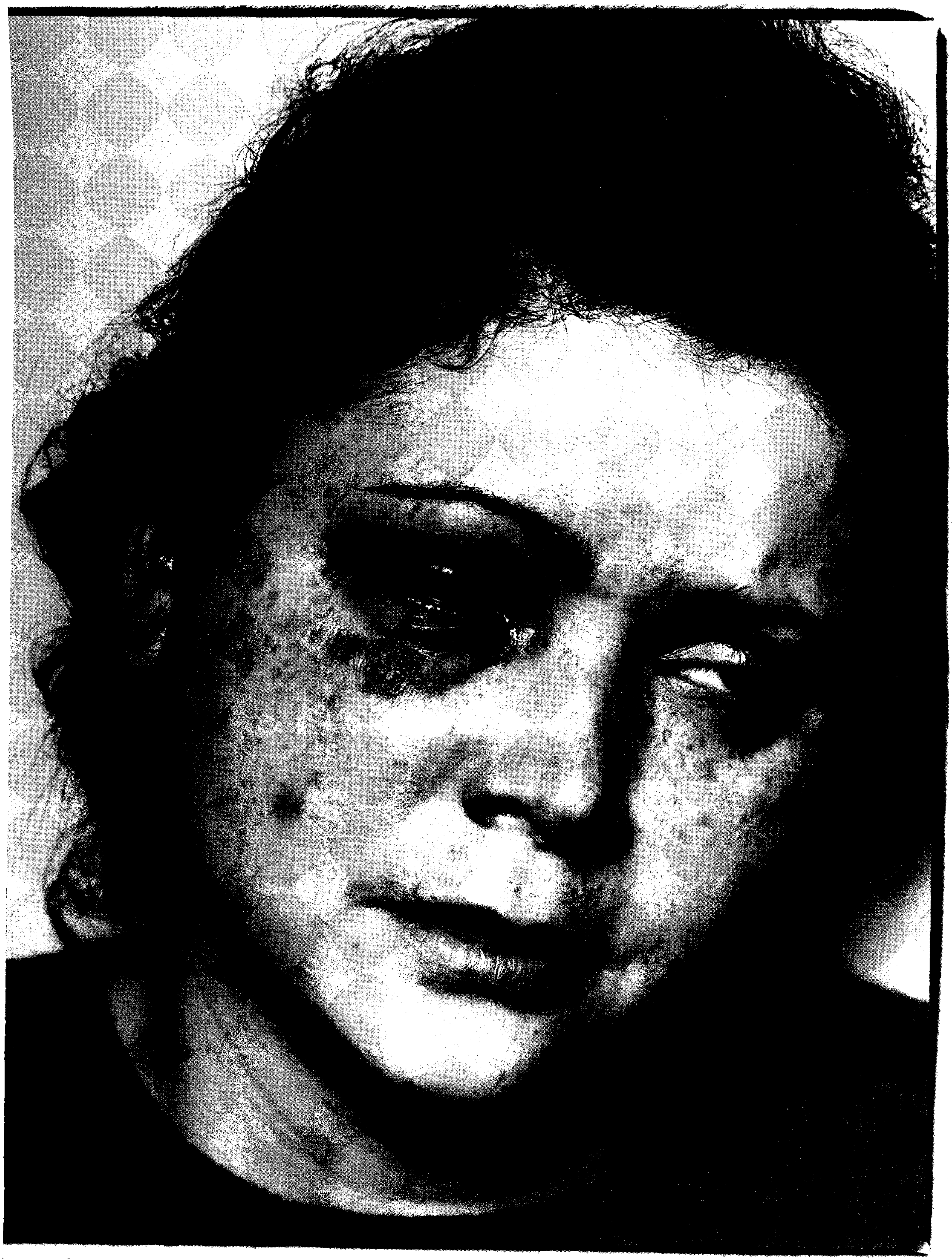
She—this Platonic she who was dead—came back to life in a later age. She is at the heart of bel-canto opera and classical ballet. And in German Romanticism, in revolutionary times, she revealed the principle of transcendence to democratic men. Whirling around the turn of the eighteenth century to the nineteenth, German *Luftmenschen* set off the grandest orchestration of Muse mystique in history. In country after country, Goethe's great theme was sounded: "*Das Ewig-Weibliche zieht uns hinan.*" ("The Eternal Feminine draws us to the heights.")

Because of Alexander Blok's large-mindedness and his influence, the Silver Age poets represent more than themselves; they represent that world culture which they so esteemed, a culture now almost past understanding, let alone retrieving. As prophecy, Blok's "terrible world" corresponds to William Butler Yeats's "terrible beauty." There are many correspondences between Blok and Yeats: Symbolism, occult mysticism, revolutionary politics, an interest in fairy tales and folklore, involvement in the theatre, worship of the Muse. In fact, Blok can almost be thought of as Yeats's Russian counterpart. Blok had many Muses, both sacred and profane; Yeats had only one; but the point is that the culture they knew could be read horizontally and was consistent the world over. Reading vertically from Yeats we come immediately to Joyce, and it is as if they belonged to two different centuries. From the moment Yeats first sees Maud Gonne, standing, as he said, like a goddess among the apple blossoms, to the moment when Stephen Dedalus, in "A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man," composes his villanelle in the glow of roselight, it is only a few years, and yet Stephen sees himself as the vatic poet of the future: "Michael Robartes [Yeats's alter ego] presses in his arms the loveliness which has long faded from the world. . . . I desire to press in my arms the loveliness which has not yet come into the world."

Today, the loveliness which Joyce and the other great modernists saw coming into the world has long faded from it. At the end of the American century, making art and thinking about art seem increasingly wistful, not to say futile, occupations. Mention the Muse and people smile. We don't know who that is anymore, and we may never know. We have made a popular culture that other countries envy and copy, but it, too, is a mystery we cannot solve. All we can do is sit at the piano, turning the dog-eared pages of some old piece of sheet music and singing to ourselves, "Laura is the face in the misty light." ♦



FACES OF ABUSE *According to Justice Department figures, there are more than a million and a half reported cases a year of wom*



ng assaulted by their husbands or boyfriends. These women recently took refuge at a Connecticut shelter. Photographs by Annie Leibovitz.

LIFE AND LETTERS

LADY WITH A PENCIL

After Harold Ross founded The New Yorker, to whom did he turn to help him shape it? To Katharine White, who matched wits and ideas with him in a near-perfect editorial partnership.

BY NANCY FRANKLIN

KATHARINE WHITE, who joined the staff of *The New Yorker* in August of 1925, six months after it was founded, by Harold Ross, agreed with her boss on many things, but she would not have agreed with the sentiment he expressed at the end of a letter he wrote to her in 1938, when she was in Maine and he was enduring the final, dragging throes of a New York summer—"the worst period of the year, with nothing on hand and no one seeming to do anything," he wrote. The letter closed, "I read a dozen stories today and all were junk. . . . An editor's life is certainly a life of disappointment. Yours sincerely, H. W. Ross." Ross famously saw failure and disappointment lurking everywhere, and he seemed to almost enjoy feeling embattled; his beleaguered vigilance was part of what made him charming, irritating, and successful. Katharine White, who was Katharine Sergeant Angell at the beginning of her *New Yorker* career, had an editor's life, too, and she knew that stories might not work and that writers might be unpredictable and unreliable, but she worried more about her writers' disappointments than about her own; to her, an editor's life was one of constantly renewed fulfillment.

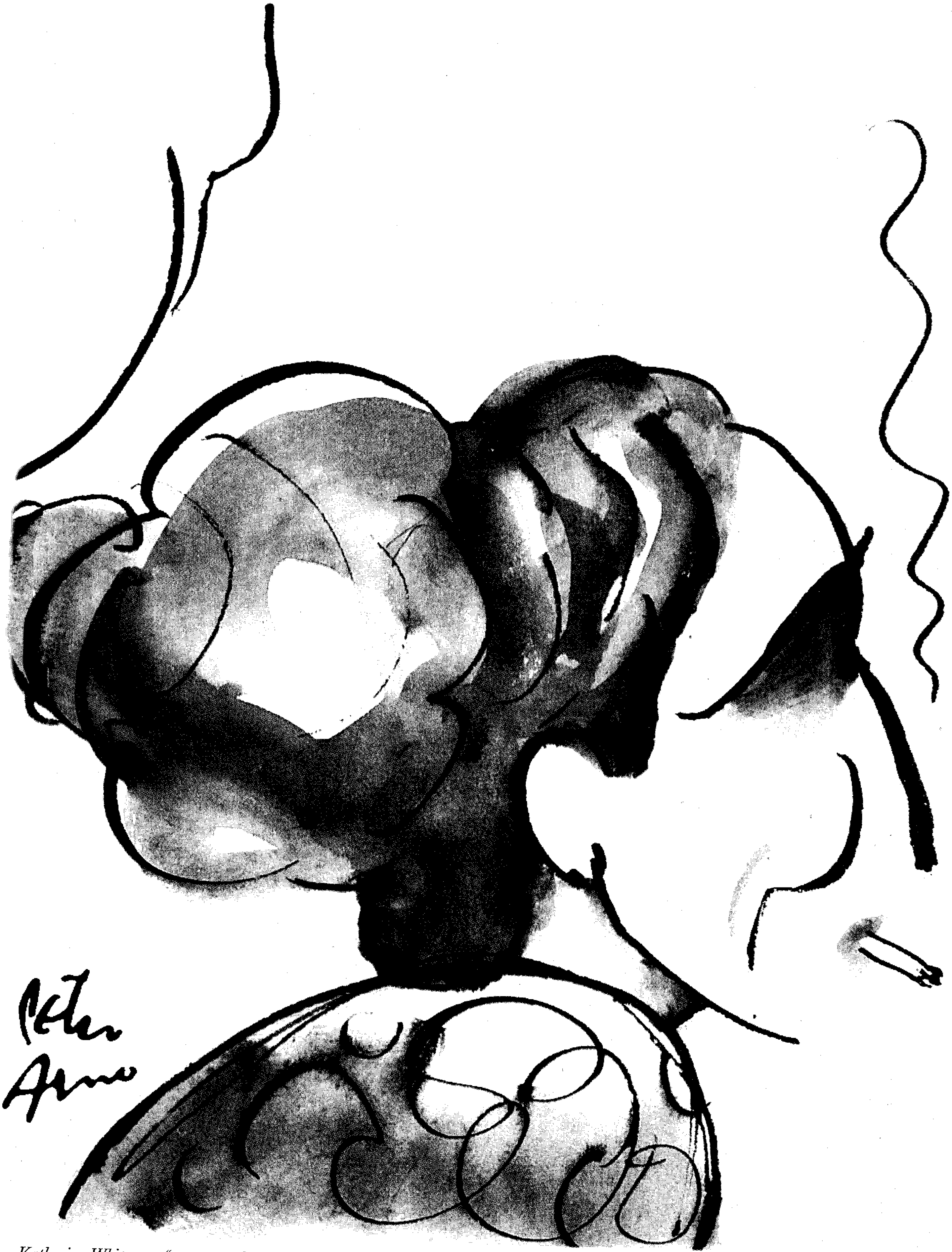
In some ways, Katharine White's ambitions for the magazine surpassed Ross's: she pushed him to publish serious poetry (while also attempting to keep the flame of light verse alive as the supply of talented practitioners dwindled over the years); she had adventurous tastes, and enlarged the scope of both the magazine's fiction and the factual pieces; and she saw that the magazine's sense of humor, in its writing and in its cartoons, could be raised above the level of a "comic paper," which is how Ross sometimes referred to his magazine. Before she was hired, as a manuscript reader, she had written a handful of magazine articles and held several jobs unrelated to journalism or the literary world. Her background was much like that of many women in publishing today. She had grown up in an upper-middle-class suburb of Boston, with a prosperous father and an aunt who was an early graduate of Smith and had worked as a teacher. (Katharine's mother had died when she was six years old.) She had attended one of Boston's best private schools for girls, and had graduated from Bryn Mawr, one of the few colleges organized around the militant belief that a woman's place was in the world. She was married to a promising attorney, a graduate of Harvard Law School. Katharine's privilege put her in the way of certain opportunities, but just as important was a kind of good luck: like thousands of other young and youngish people—when she was hired, she was thirty-two and was the mother of two small children—in New York in the nineteen-twenties, she was in the right place at the right time. What's inspiring about her life and career is how much she did with that luck, how thoroughly she transformed the place and the time she was in. What's even more remarkable is that it didn't seem to occur to her not to.

Within months, she became indispensable to Ross, and soon there was no part of the magazine she wasn't involved in. The collaboration was an unlikely one. Ross had grown up in Colorado and Utah, and had left school at the age of thirteen. For several years, he worked as a tramp newspaperman all over the country, and during the First World War he was an editor and reporter in France for *The Stars and Stripes*, the Army newspaper. He played poker, he swore, and he dated actresses. But, though Ross was self-educated, he was not unsophisticated; and Katharine's sophistication was the kind that allowed her to see the promise of Ross's vision, which at that time was far from obvious, and to help him clarify and improve it. As William Shawn, the editor of the magazine after Ross's death, in 1951, wrote in her obituary, in 1977, "More than any other editor except Harold Ross himself, Katharine White gave *The New Yorker* its shape, and set it on its course."

WHEN I came to work at *The New Yorker*, in 1978, in the magazine's typing pool, I knew very little about Katharine White—only that she had been married to E. B. White and, before they were married, had encouraged Ross to hire him as a staff writer; that she was an "important" fiction editor (not that I knew then what editors actually did, or what made one important); and that she was, by her first marriage, the mother of Roger Angell, another important fiction editor, whose office was at the other end of the building from the typing pool, and whose lunch I sometimes ordered when I filled in at the receptionist's desk on my floor (chicken salad on white toast, black coffee, vanilla ice cream). And I knew that Roger's—Mr. Angell's—office had once been his mother's office. (After Katharine White retired, at the end of 1960, her office—a prime piece of real estate—was left vacant for several years. This is an extreme case of a practice that was not uncommon by the time I got here: letting the "meaning" drain out of an office, so its future inhabitants wouldn't get any big ideas about who they were. But when Roger moved into her office, in the mid-seventies, after another editor retired, the meaning drained right back in. He says that a psychiatrist once told him that his being an editor and occupying his mother's office was "the greatest piece of active sublimation in my experience.")

Though Katharine White was officially held in high esteem around the

KATHARINE S. WHITE COLLECTION, BRYN MAWR COLLEGE



Katharine White was "someone whose standards and capabilities were so much higher than your own that you just sat down and shut up."

OFFICE POLITICS

THE HOME FRONT

BY LILLIAN ROSS

SHORTLY before the end of the Second World War, I was hired as a reporter for this magazine by William Shawn, then managing editor, and his decision was O.K.'d by the editor, Harold Ross. I was dizzy with joy. Whatever may elicit the work of my fellow-writers, for me it has always been the spirit of the single person in charge of making the publication a living entity. As editors, Ross and Shawn were alike in many ways. Both were selfless in their devotion to their writers and artists, and both possessed a genius for connecting with talent, nurturing it, even mothering it. Each of them had been close to his mother, and both had a gentlemanly protectiveness, even a chauvinism, toward women, yet for a long time it was hard for women writers to find equal footing with men at the magazine.

I arrived at *The New Yorker* with three other women reporters, all of us in our early twenties, and we became the first women general staff reporters. We had been hired to fill in for the men fighting in and reporting from the armed services. My colleagues in our female legion were Andy Logan, Roseanne Smith, and Scottie Fitzgerald Lanahan (the daughter of F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald). All of us were to do reporting for The Talk of the Town. "You may not like the work," Shawn told me when he hired me. "We want you to write *fact* pieces." Saying this, he looked embarrassed, as though he were saying it under duress. Harold Ross, of course, believed that women were supposed to write fiction, not facts. We knew about Ross's extreme reluctance to have us there; women in the office, he had said, were "trouble."

The new women Talk reporters were not allowed to write what were called "Talk Originals." We reported stories and turned in our "notes," which were given to a rewrite man, who would then, among other things, give the story "a masculine point of view." The rewrite man ran our "notes" through the typewriter and made a few changes so that the voice would be perceived as male. One of my first stories was about President Harry Truman's earlier career as a haberdasher. On the telephone, I interviewed Edward Jacobson of Kansas City, formerly of Truman & Jacobson ("Shirts, Collars, Hosiery, Gloves, Belts, and Hats"). The rewrite began this way: "One of our younger assistants . . . was going through Kansas City [and] among the people he spoke to was Edward Jacobson. . . ."

My colleagues among the pioneer women were all good reporters. The calibre of our work spoke for itself; our male colleagues responded to us and admired us. Not long after we started, a military plane crashed into the Empire State Building, and I tried and failed to get past the police lines to report on the disaster. When I got back to the office I told Mr. Shawn what had happened, explaining, lamely, that I hadn't had a police pass. "Roseanne *Smith* got through," he replied, "and Roseanne *Smith* didn't have a police pass." Ross, for his part, finally came around. One day, I ran into him in the elevator. "Good thing you're following your bent," he muttered. After Shawn succeeded Ross, in 1952, the mandatory "male point of view" for The Talk of the Town was gradually discarded, and eventually all the women wrote "Talk Originals," and long pieces, too.

I think that Harold Ross and William Shawn would be pleased to see that the shop is now, in a sense, a matriarchy, with a female editor, and many other women in top jobs. Why not? It just worked out this way, but all this mothering for the children of talent—and so many of *them* are now women, too—is also a tradition. ♦

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magazine when I began working there, the message that came through when her name was mentioned was decidedly mixed. Most of what I knew about her I'd learned from Brendan Gill's "Here at The New Yorker," which had been published three years earlier. Mrs. White was eighty-two and was in poor health when the book came out, and Gill's descriptions of her and several of her colleagues so pained her that she made sure her annotated copy was included in the collection of books and personal papers she bequeathed to Bryn Mawr. Still, Gill did credit her with helping to invent the magazine, and he called her Ross's "intellectual conscience."

Harrison Kinney, in his fat new biography of James Thurber, writes, "Nearly all descriptions of Katharine sooner or later include the adjective 'formidable.' " This is true, except for the "nearly" part. The word is so loaded when it is applied to women that for some years I was, I think, afraid to find out what it was loaded *with*. The magazine was by then an institution, and fitting in—disappearing, if possible—was encouraged, and I wanted to fit in, so when people at the office used that word to describe Katharine White ("forbidding" cropped up a lot, too), and spoke of being afraid, even terrified, of her, I absorbed their ambivalence without examining it.

The grudging quality that always came through in conversation is in the books, too. They give with one hand while taking away, subtly, with the other. "She took care to make her weight felt at every turn" is how Gill summarizes her influence at the magazine, and in his wording there is a hint of something furtive and not quite right, as in, say, "She took care to wipe her fingerprints off the gun." Scott Elledge, E. B. White's biographer, acknowledges Katharine White's influence on twentieth-century letters by listing the writers she brought to the magazine—the roster includes Thurber, Vladimir Nabokov, Marianne Moore, John O'Hara, Mary McCarthy, Clarence Day, S. N. Behrman, Jean Stafford, William Maxwell, Ogden Nash, Irwin Shaw, Nadine Gordimer, John Cheever, and John Updike—but he, too, seems to be made nervous by Katharine White's tremendous strengths. He writes, "The qualities that made her seem formidable . . . were essentially intellectual—

along with her straight-backed, one might almost say regal, carriage." In the very next sentence you can almost hear him breathe a sigh of relief as he chivalrously rushes to rescue her from the brink of smart-woman purgatory: "These qualities were softened, however, by her equally evident and appealing femininity." Even her own biographer, Linda H. Davis, whose "Onward and Upward," published in 1987, gives Katharine her due in many respects and is the most valuable source of information about her life, suffers occasionally from a tone of lamentation over her imperfections. (The title of Davis's book is right on the money, though: "Onward and Upward," a phrase borrowed from the Unitarians, was a heading that Katharine cooked up for the magazine, and it's as good a description as any of her modus vivendi.)

It wasn't until recently, when I took another look into Katharine White's life, that I uncovered my own prejudices about her, and I realized that the main impression I had formed from my first reading of Davis's book (and it's no fault of the book), nine years ago, was of the recently divorced Katharine Angell's marrying E. B. White without telling her children, and of their finding out about it two days later, when a relative read the news in Walter Winchell's column. This shocks me now as much as it did when I first learned of it—Roger was nine then, and his sister, Nancy (now Nancy Angell Stableford), who was going on thirteen, says that her mother never satisfactorily explained the lapse—but what shocks me more is how much my judgment of her as a mother affected my judgment of her as an editor, in a way that it never would have if she had been a man, and a father.

ANOTHER double-edged word often used to describe Katharine White is "aristocratic." No doubt this has something to do with her appearance; even at a time when people in general dressed more formally than they do now, Katharine White stood out in her beautifully tailored clothes and Sally Victor hats. She was a small woman, only a couple of inches over five feet, and she had big gray eyes. She had long brown hair (by the forties, it had turned gray), which she always had done at the Frances Fox Institute, and which she wore in a bun held together with bone hairpins. "She was terribly handsome," William Maxwell says. "I never saw her in any way in disarray." Mary D. Kierstead, who began working at the magazine in 1948 and became a fiction reader in 1957, says that evidence of Katharine White's great taste and style was everywhere—in the way she dressed, in the objects in her house, and in how she planted her garden—and the result, she says, was a feeling not of "nasty neatness" but of inviting comfort, a sense that everything was somehow just right. Her ability to express strong opinions about the way things should be done was everywhere in her work: she never had the title of executive editor but she had, with Ross's blessing, executive authority. Maxwell, who retired from *The New Yorker* in the mid-seventies, was a fiction editor for forty years, and was a colleague of Katharine White's for twenty-five of them. He says, "What was remarkable about her was that she was always reaching out toward writers who were not characteristic of the magazine. If there was a distance they couldn't quite bridge"—he cites Nabokov, with his fondness for neologisms and archaisms—"she found a way to bridge it."

Maxwell goes on to recall, "She had a sense of what was good for the magazine as a whole. She'd rip the magazine to pieces if something came in that was topical, even though it was early Monday morning"—the day the magazine went to press. "She was aware of the importance of making *The New Yorker* seem up to date. And it was important. She was continually interested in what was happening in the city." Her interests were political, social, literary, cultural. (And culinary—I saw a memo she wrote to Lois Long in 1929, asking her to check out the food buyer at Macy's as a possible Profile subject.) Maxwell says she was always writing to her congressman; Roger Angell remembers his parents sweeping out of the house at night, dressed up to go to the theatre or a dinner party.

Joseph Mitchell is an admirer of Katharine White's and was an office friend (together they decided that the two greatest American books were Mark Twain's "Life on the Mississippi" and Sarah Orne Jewett's "The Country of the Pointed Firs"). Mitchell says, "She was so of the moment. She reminded me in a weird way—her worldliness, though that isn't the word at all—of Colette. She was a very good writer. There's a kind of comedy to it, a way of looking at the world. The humor barely peeps out, and consequently you remember it."

Between 1958 and 1970, Katharine White wrote fourteen gardening columns for the magazine (which E. B. White collected in book form after her death), and they owe their existence, in a sense, to an event in her life that she was not entirely happy about. In 1938, E. B. White decided that he could no longer be a writer if being a writer meant living in New York City, and that year the Whites moved to a Maine farmhouse they had bought five years earlier. Katharine continued working half time for *The New Yorker;* every day, her secretary in the office mailed her a huge packet of manuscripts, galleys, letters, and books, and every day Katharine mailed back a packet of marked-up manuscripts and galleys, memos, and opinions. Years later, she protested Brendan Gill's assertion that she had been "reluctant" to leave her job. She said that her years in Maine, where she spent a lot of time in her garden, had, among their other benefits, laid the groundwork for her writing. She said that she had been sad to leave, but not reluctant. Ross, however, was more than sad to see the Whites go. He did his best to keep Katharine informed about what was going on in the office, and he continued to rely on her judgment as much as the distance between them permitted. And he hoped they would return.

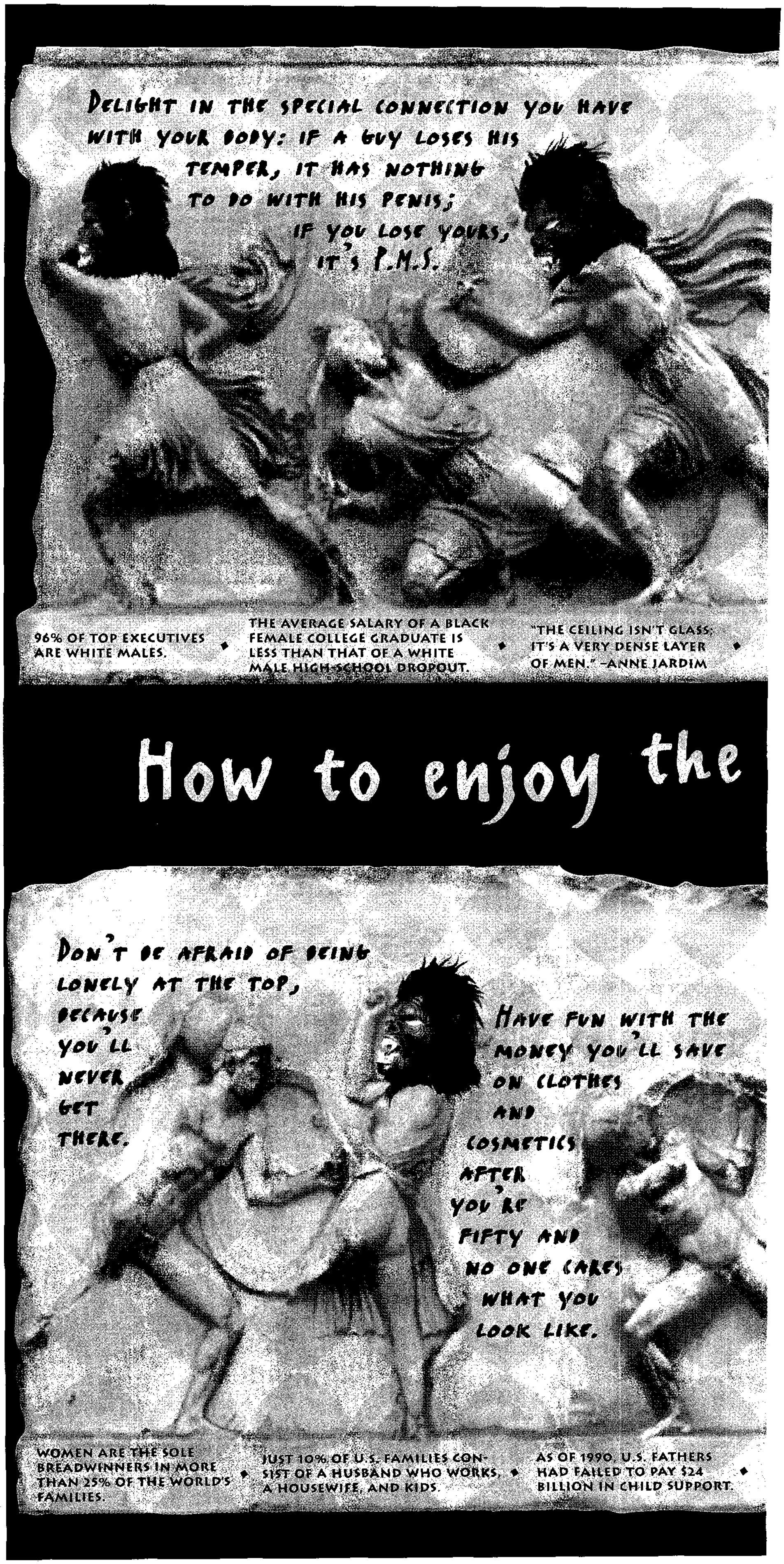
Ross got his wish five years later, during the war. The Whites came back to New York, and Katharine resumed her editorial duties in the office. She was no longer the head of the fiction department, for she had resigned that position in 1938, but her involvement in the magazine was total, and remained so for the next fourteen years. In 1956, she became the head of the fiction department again for a short time, and in 1957 she and her husband left New York for good and moved back to their farm. Katharine took on the role of consulting editor for three years, and then retired. But her interest in the magazine never died: she read every issue until failing eyesight made that impossible, and made a point of letting writers—and not just her own writers—know when she particularly liked a piece of theirs.

IN a letter that Katharine wrote to Ross from Maine in 1940, she added this postscript: "When you get long memos not written on my beautiful office typewriter, it means Mr. White is trying to write. He told me hearing me batting away made him feel uncreative, when he was struggling to put words on paper! . . . So I just shut up, and take to pencil." Not surprisingly, the solicitousness and understanding that marked Katharine's relationships with her writers also extended to Andy—as E. B. White had been known to one and all since his college days. Andy came first, and the household always revolved around his needs. The marriage was by all accounts a loving one, although the match appeared to be almost as unlikely as the professional partnership between Katharine and Ross.

Katharine was seven years older than Andy. When they married, she was, at thirty-seven, a well-paid editor with many responsibilities, both personal and professional, and he was, at thirty, a writer of still small reputation who had never been married; when it came to romantic entanglements, he desired the romance but dreaded the entanglement. One person who knew the Whites said of his relationship with Katharine, "He didn't play hard to get—he *was* hard to get, though very happy once got." She admired him as a writer and found him funny, and he admired her as an editor and found her funny, too, in a different way. He told his biographer, Scott Elledge, about a discussion he and Katharine had one morning:

> I don't remember how ivy got into the discussion but potted plants have never been far removed from Katharine's thoughts. Anyway, when I heard the word "ivy," I said petulantly, "Oh, let the ivy rest!" K's whole manner changed. Instead of slamming the ball back over the net at me, she replied in a mild and thoughtful voice: "That sounds like the name of an English country house."
>
> At this point, I decided that she was the girl for me and the hell with the obstacles. So, after some badgering, she agreed to it, and we spent the rest of the day getting married.

Katharine's relative lack of irony made some people think she was humorless; her husband, whose self-consciousness was often debilitating to him, found great charm,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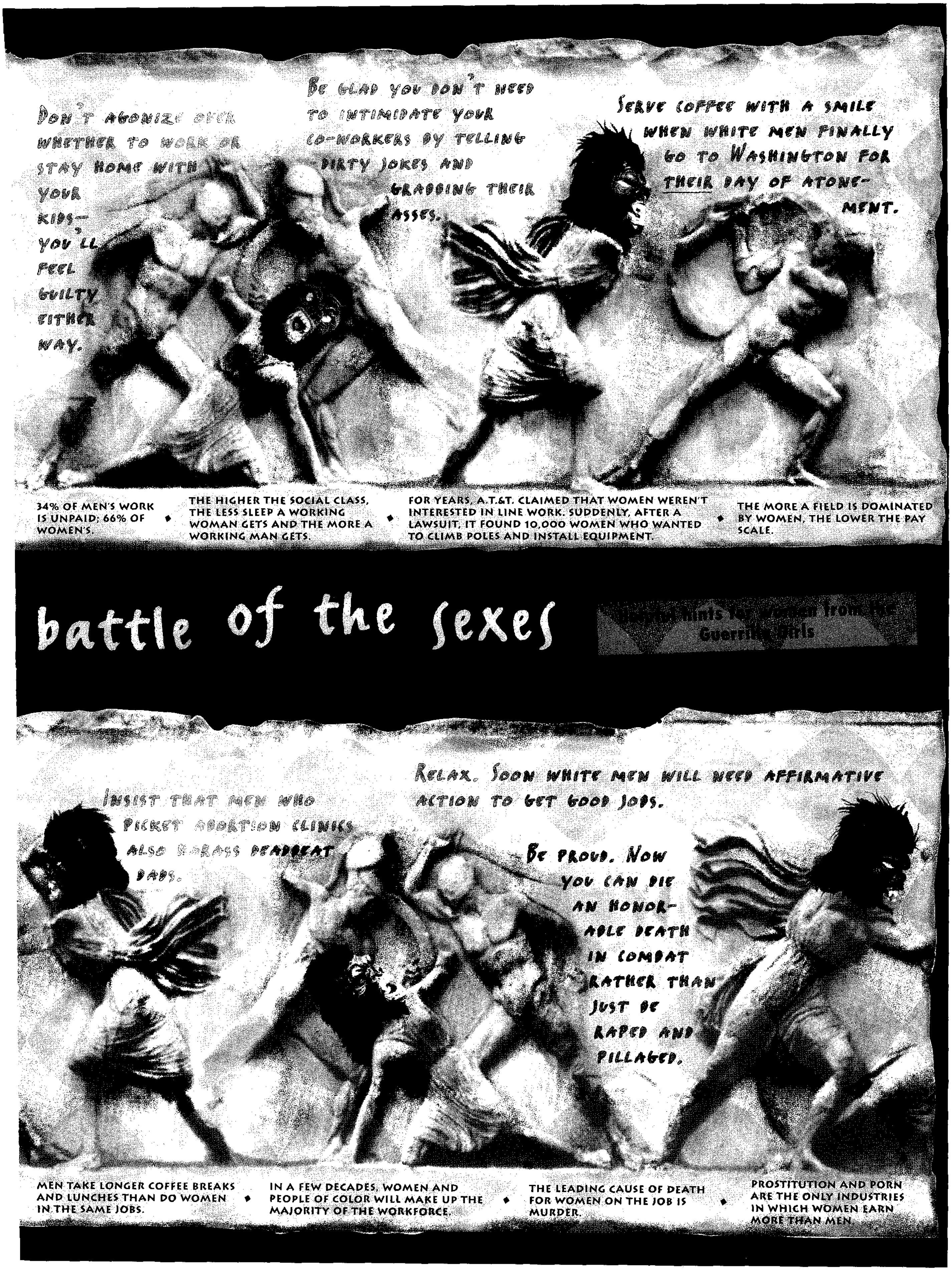

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◆

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◆

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and probably great relief, in her directness.

If Katharine was like a cross between Eleanor Roosevelt and Jane Austen, Andy was in many ways like a character he himself created, in his first children's book, "Stuart Little." Stuart is a mouse, the son of human parents in New York City, and he leaves his family and goes off on a quest to find Margalo, the bird he has fallen in love with. White, the youngest of six children, was slight of build, mouselike in his vulnerability and lack of confidence, and Stuart-like in his perpetual sensitivity to romance and to nature. He was boyish and romantic to the end of his life (and became better-looking as he got older and his hair and his mustache turned from brown to white), and he never felt more at home than he did at his farm, surrounded by animals. Stuart never finds Margalo, but Andy and Katharine found each other, and their devotion did not diminish with time. A week after they were married, he wrote to her that he was filled with hope, because she was "the person to whom I return" and "the recurrent phrase in my life." He went on, "I realized that so strongly one day a couple of weeks ago when, after being away and among people I wasn't sure of and in circumstances I had doubts about, I came back and walked into your office and saw how real and incontrovertible you seemed. I don't know whether you know just what I mean or whether you experience, ever, the same feeling; but what I mean is, that being with you is like walking on a very clear morning—definitely the sensation of belonging there." Forty-eight years later, in response to a letter of condolence he had received after Katharine's death, he wrote, "She seemed beautiful to me the first time I saw her, and she seemed beautiful when I gave her the small kiss that was goodbye."

KATHARINE WHITE was very private, and, Linda Davis points out, "Much of her time was spent alone in a room—reading, writing, and editing. . . . That time spent alone prohibits us from knowing certain things about Katharine White's inner life. Some things she did not communicate." True enough—and certain aspects of her private life were so unusual, and would be considered just as unusual even now, that you can't help wanting to know what she made of them. Katharine divorced her first husband,

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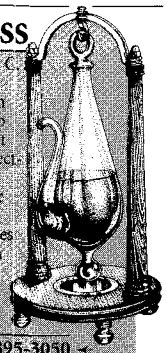

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Ernest Angell, in 1929 (after spending the requisite three months in Reno), and a few months later she married Andy White. She and Ernest had joint custody of the children, but Roger and Nancy's home was with their father, on the Upper East Side; their mother's apartment, in the Village, where she lived with Andy and their new baby, Joel, who was born in 1930, was a place they went to on weekends. On the subject of this unconventional arrangement there is only silence. Her pieces for the magazine—the gardening columns, fourteen years' worth of children's-book reviews, a couple of brief reminiscences—are full of autobiographical and personal references, and the voice is vivid and conversational, yet the emotions of the person behind the voice remain fairly well hidden. But in her papers at Bryn Mawr and in those in *The New Yorker's* files, which are now housed in some thousand boxes in the New York Public Library, across the street from the magazine's offices, Katharine White left a lengthy, detailed record of the part of her life that mattered most to her—her life as an editor.

READING the memos and letters that went back and forth between Harold Ross and Katharine White through the years made me giddy with a feeling of discovery, as if I'd suddenly hit upon the structure of *The New Yorker's* DNA—almost as if I'd been present at the creation. I could only scratch the surface of the archives, but every folder I opened had something *alive* in it—a blast of criticism, a burst of humor, an odd phrase, a gripe, an idea, a forceful opinion. I'd been to the archives at Bryn Mawr, and I got the same sense of life in the letters there, but largely through indirection, for most of the letters there were written *to* Katharine. Her sense of humor was expressed in her correspondents' eager attempts to appeal to it, her devotion in their expressions of gratitude to her and concern for her. (Katharine's letters at Bryn Mawr are often about her health, a subject that occupied a sizable space in her thoughts as a young woman and preoccupied her more and more as she got older. In 1975, Jean Stafford wrote to her, "Our correspondence, yours and mine, could be the subject of a thesis with the title, perhaps, of 'The Medical Histories of One Contemporary American Emancipated Woman

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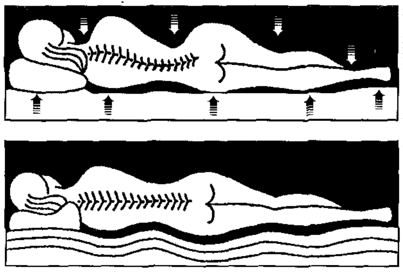

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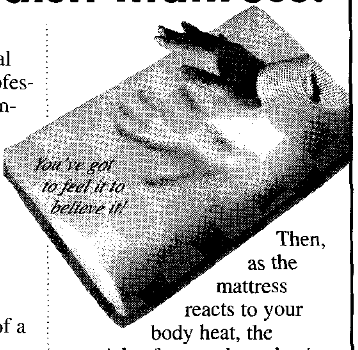

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Fiction Editor and One Contemporary American Emancipated Woman Fiction Writer: An In-Depth Look at Orthopaedic and Allergic, etc. Problems among Literary Women of the Twentieth Century.' " Enough said.)

In Katharine's own letters, handwritten second thoughts often sidle in next to the first, typewritten ones. A letter to an old friend goes over the ground of meeting and becoming engaged to Ernest Angell in neutral fashion: "On my eighteenth birthday, just before I entered Bryn Mawr, Ernest proposed to me and we became engaged, and stayed so for five years before he was through Harvard and law school and he had found a job in Cleveland." End of paragraph. But then, in neat script, comes "Such early commitments just don't work." Katharine, with an eye on future scholars, often attached notes to the letters. To a cranky late-thirties memo from Ross she appends this typed note: "A wonderfully censorious and funny memo to me from Ross. One of the chores I had had to do always was read every word of the X issue (just out), point out faults, repetitions, typos, merits, and failings.... Apparently my reports (or *a* report) became too burdensome and worst of all carried queries I should have asked of someone else. I was rebuked." She adds, in her own hand, "The wonderful thing about my relationship with Ross was that he could be utterly outspoken with me and I to him but we never got mad at each other. I felt just as free to tell him he was 'crazy' as he felt free to call me 'crazy.' "

The memos in the Public Library's archives have exactly that kind of openness and honesty, and that confiding tone, and a basic understanding of each other that saw them through their constant misunderstandings. Like the repartee between Cary Grant and Rosalind Russell in "His Girl Friday," and between William Powell and Myrna Loy in "The Thin Man," the exchanges between Ross and Katharine White carry a romantic electrical charge—the romance coming from how close these two came to the heady ideal, hardly ever achieved between men and women at work, of complete equality.

Ross to White: "I did not intend you to take Sifton's memorandum seriously. I sent it as a curiosity."

White to Ross: "I can't really believe that I'm to reject this poem for the reasons you give. What's more I don't care to.... I really think you are wrong from the literary point of view and hope you will reconsider."

Ross to White: "Tell Guiterman he not only got the statue cleaned up but the word 'hell' in the New York Times, which is a much greater accomplishment."

White to Ross: "In general I might say that this book is fascinating, informative, and awful."

Ross to White: "Not only, to my astonishment, does Fowler use no point after Mrs but he has a little piece on the use of the period after abbreviations (or constructions) that amazes me for its impracticability. It is so revolutionary that Edgar Hoover would punch him as a red if he were alive and showed up over here."

White to Ross (in 1934): "I am going to suggest something which I think at first will give you all the horrors. It is that we get a radio for this office."

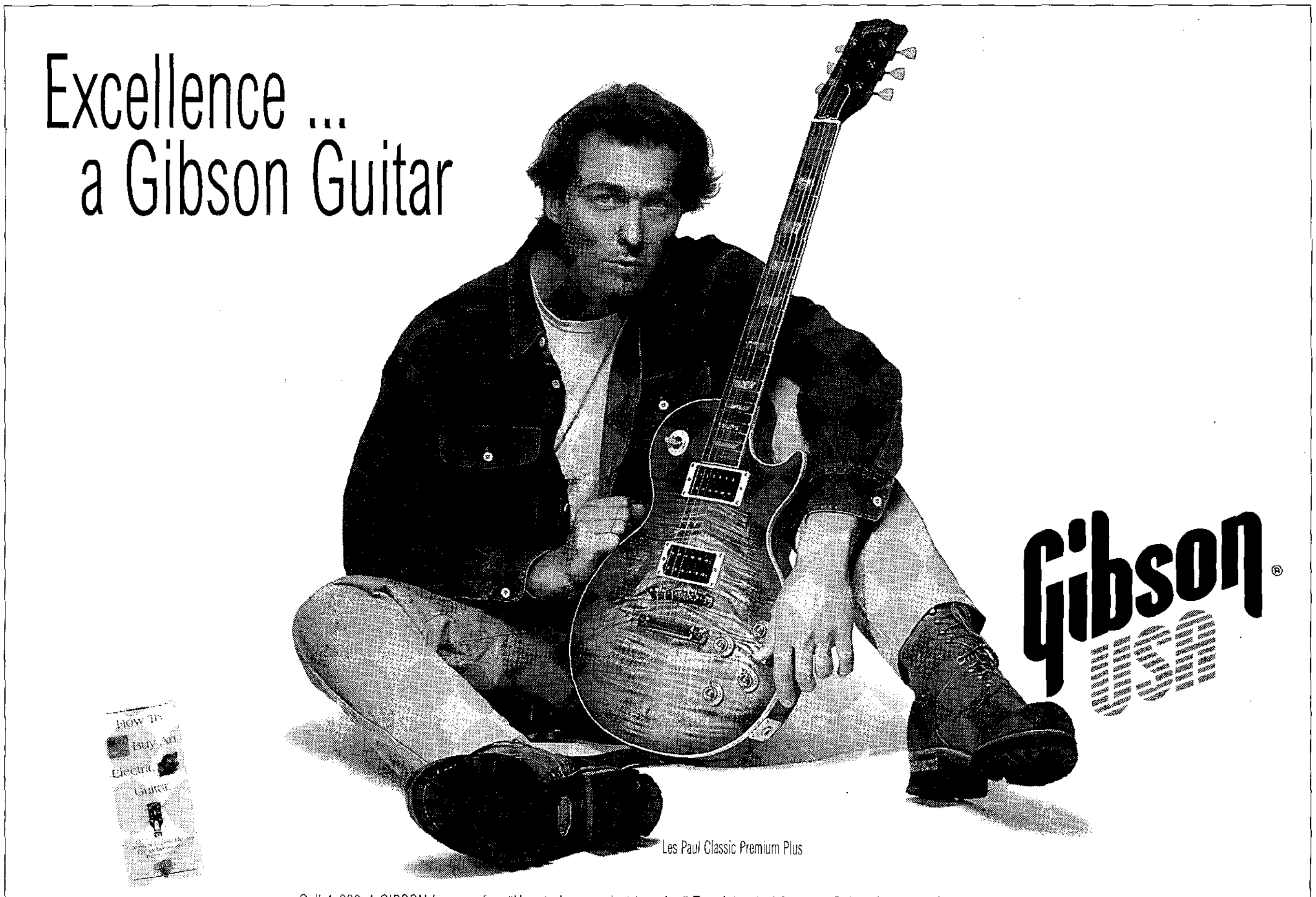
White to Ross, on a pink routing slip:

> Mr. Ross—
> "Of all mean words this tongue
> doth know
> The meanest of these is 'I told you so.' "
> KSW

The three-by-five pink "to-from" slip, stalwart transmitter of pithy directives and opinions and jokes at the magazine for more than half a century, is now slated for extinction—an unspeakable development to those of us with ancient blood ties to our office supplies. Seeing this last one, from the early thirties, reminded me of a note that Harriet Walden, who was Katharine's secretary for several years before her retirement (and my boss in the typing pool), and afterward remained her liaison to the magazine, showed me recently. Their correspondence was warm and affectionate, but Katharine was once swept away by a paper-induced panic. In 1964, she wrote, "Dear Harriet: Please never again send this horrible special white paper now required in the office. It can't be used in this household. Please try to order, and we'll pay for, yellow paper of the old sort.... As EBW says, it's a serious matter—like taking away a violinist's bow, one that he has used all his life. It's *crippling* to every writer I've talked to. KSW." This note was written on—the congregation will please rise—a little pink routing slip.

What really stands out in the White-Ross correspondence I saw is how adult these two people were, how well they listened to each other, how naturally it seemed to come to them to treat each other as equals. Joseph Mitchell says, "I *liked* the way she got along with Mr. Ross. I never knew two people who were put together so well. They became an extraordinary pair." It was a collaboration that Katharine somehow took in stride; and though the partnership was a model one, it has never come close to being repeated at the magazine. For three decades, Katharine White was the only female editor on the premises. In a 1944 note to Ross about the artist Helen Hokinson, who was vacillating between renewing her contract with *The New Yorker* and going into newspaper syndication, Katharine seems to enjoy confiding the pleasure she takes in her position. She told him she spoke to Hokinson about the "disadvantages of her being typed as woman page stuff, and the slight stigma attached to the artistic merit of any work by women, which is done for an exclusively feminine audience," and adds, "I told her I thought she ought to feel it as much of a comedown as I would feel it if I had to give up being an editor of *The New Yorker* for being an editor of a fashion magazine." The respect she and Ross had for each other bred a loyalty that was free of fear, and it made good work possible—and good work was what both of them were interested in above all else. Perhaps this is where Katharine's "formidableness" comes in; as Gardner Botsford, an editor at the magazine from the forties on, puts it, in his own pithy, pink-slip way, "She was someone whose standards and capabilities were so much higher than your own that you just sat down and shut up." Katharine's work was her life to such an extent that the day after she married Andy White she was at her desk, banging out memos to Ross (and still signing them K. S. Angell): a suggestion for Robert Benchley's theatre column, a memo about a Peter Arno cover.

Having grown up with the idea that good taste was not something you exercised so much as it was something you didn't violate, I had assumed that Katharine White's much lauded good taste in editorial matters was reined-in and backward-looking, more concerned with what the magazine shouldn't be doing than with what it could be doing, but in memo after memo she pushes Ross (and, later, Shawn) to widen the embrace of the magazine and to move it forward. There are ideas for Profiles of national, not just local, figures; long lists of writers who might be good for book reviews; countless memos on writers she's tracking and pursuing; suggestions for covers and cartoons; a checklist of tired cartoon ideas to watch out for and squelch. There was a long memo to Ross about the editing of fiction: she listed twenty-seven names, all of them contributors who had complained, with varying degrees of vehemence, about being overedited, and she urged Ross to go easy with his queries, and told him that several important writers, including Faulkner and Hemingway, refused to submit their fiction to *The New Yorker* for fear of Ross's tampering. There are endless ideas for Talk of the Town stories, and fairly endless criticisms of published ones: on one tear sheet, she underlined a lead sentence that read,



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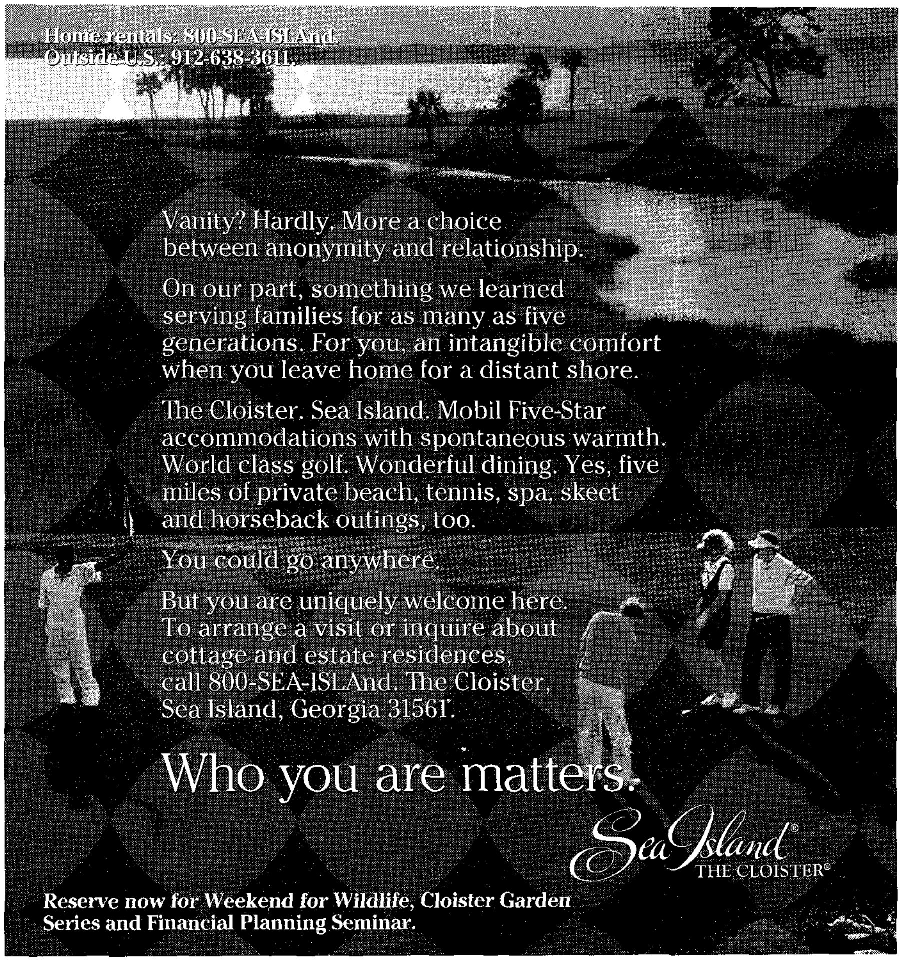

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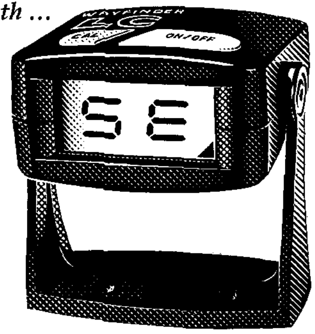

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"Every now and then we run across an announcement so staggering to our reason that we have to go off somewhere and lie down for a week," and wrote next to it, "This is getting pretty neurotic." Most striking of all was a memo of "random thoughts" which a number of modern press critics would be all too pleased to have written: "Talk lacks *news*, lacks any digging for facts on important things and too much digging for facts on stereotyped quaint or curious, but dull and trivial, people and places—quaint shops, queer and unimportant people, people who have lived longer or made buttons longer or collected more queer collections than anyone else, etc. It's all singularly devitalized. We have too many long dullish personality stories about people who are well enough to tell about but are not the people in the news one wants to know about. Why, for example, couldn't we have found out who wrote 'Washington Merry-Go-Round,' which everyone is crazy to know, instead of publishing a long story on the doctor of the Fire Dept. (This was a good story by the way—I don't mean he wasn't worth writing about, but only cite him as not being a hot news personality.) . . . Also, I still believe in calling in for occasional meetings people like Benchley, Long, Sullivan, Markey and Mosher—someone on sports, etc. We're no longer a lively group of people working for the love of it—we're a bedraggled, institutionalized scattered force, each working in our little rut." The memo is dated August 27, 1931.

Katharine seems to have perfected the rhetorical use of the gone-to-hell-in-a-handbasket motif in 1931. That fall, in a detailed memo to James M. Cain, who, before he went on to write "Double Indemnity" and "The Postman Always Rings Twice," served a stint as managing editor, she wrote, "Dear Mr. Cain: I wish to register a strong protest on the present telephone service. I don't think I have ever known it so bad in the history of the magazine."

OVER and over, when I talked to writers who had worked with Katharine White, I heard tales of endless encouragement and support. (Not that she was uncritical—she did not spare Nabokov her anxiety about the subject matter of "Lolita," and she told Mary McCarthy that she felt "The Group" was "too much a social document and too little a novel.") She was always honest with her writers, always in touch with them, and always eager to see their next story or poem. When I spoke to William Maxwell, I asked him what Katharine White was like to work with. He had been a contributor of short stories to the magazine before he joined the staff, and she had been his first editor. He said, "The strongest impression I have of her is that she was maternal."

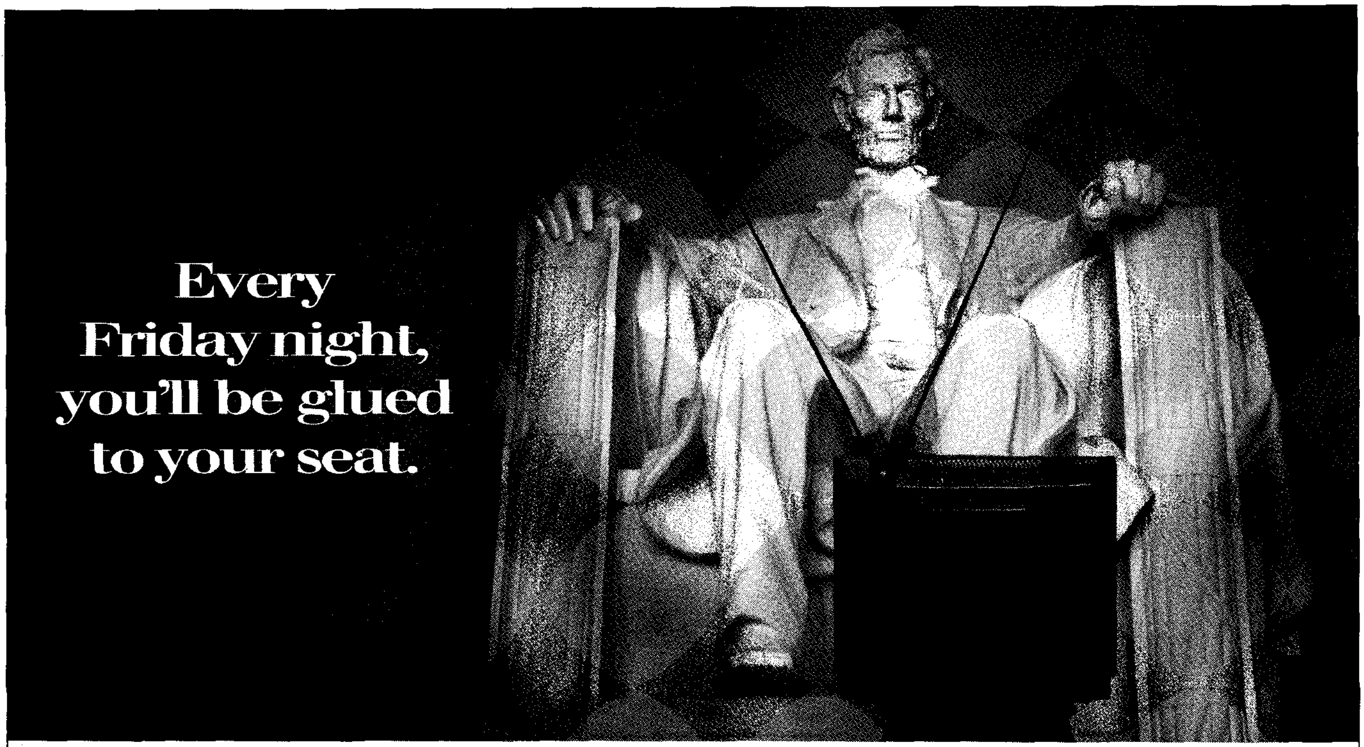
Our conversation took place before I began rooting around at Bryn Mawr and the Public Library, when I was still trying to square the conflicting images I had of her—the nurturing, encouraging editor and the mother who basically gave up her children—and I said, "It's funny; as an editor she was maternal, and as a mother she was editorial."

"I think that's not even to be wondered at," he said. If you have a creative life, you can only do so much, he explained—something he, too, had had to come to terms with. "If you give it in one place, it has to be taken away from another."

Maxwell's response to my puzzlement was so matter-of-fact that I didn't realize until later that he hadn't really explained the contradiction—he had just restated it as a fact of life. But that was the whole point: we were looking at the same thing in different ways, as men and women have been brought up to do. Men tend to see their lives, regardless of the balance of the various parts, as a unified whole, but the prevailing metaphor for women of my generation has failure built into it: we are said to "juggle" the various parts of our lives, and the only possible outcome if we concentrate on one ball in particular is that we drop the others. But this is not how Katharine White saw her life—partly because she could afford not to, by hiring people to juggle for her, but mainly because she just didn't think that way. When I started looking at her life as she looked at it—and as she lived it—it suddenly seemed all of a piece.

Roger Angell grew up with *The New Yorker:* his mother and Andy White, he told me, "talked about Ross all the time—he was like another person at the dinner table." Roger sold his first story to the magazine fifty-two years ago, at the age of twenty-three, and he has now been a fiction editor here for forty years. (He and his mother overlapped for only a matter of a few months, but he did inherit a number of her writers.) Needless to say, he has spent a lot more time than I have sorting out the apparent contradictions in his mother's life and their effect on his life. By now, he seems to see her as she would have wanted to be seen—as someone who was actively, passionately engaged in what she was doing. "All the signs of her work were around her wherever she went," he said. "She carried one of those big brown portfolios—it was stuffed with galleys and manuscripts, and she always had brown pencils scattered around, and big erasers and eraser scrubbings and cigarette ashes. If she was formidable, if people were scared of her, it was because she was so good at what she did, and she knew so much, and she was in the middle of everything—not because she'd been given power but because she assumed that this was where she belonged, because she cared so much."

Roger leaned forward to make his



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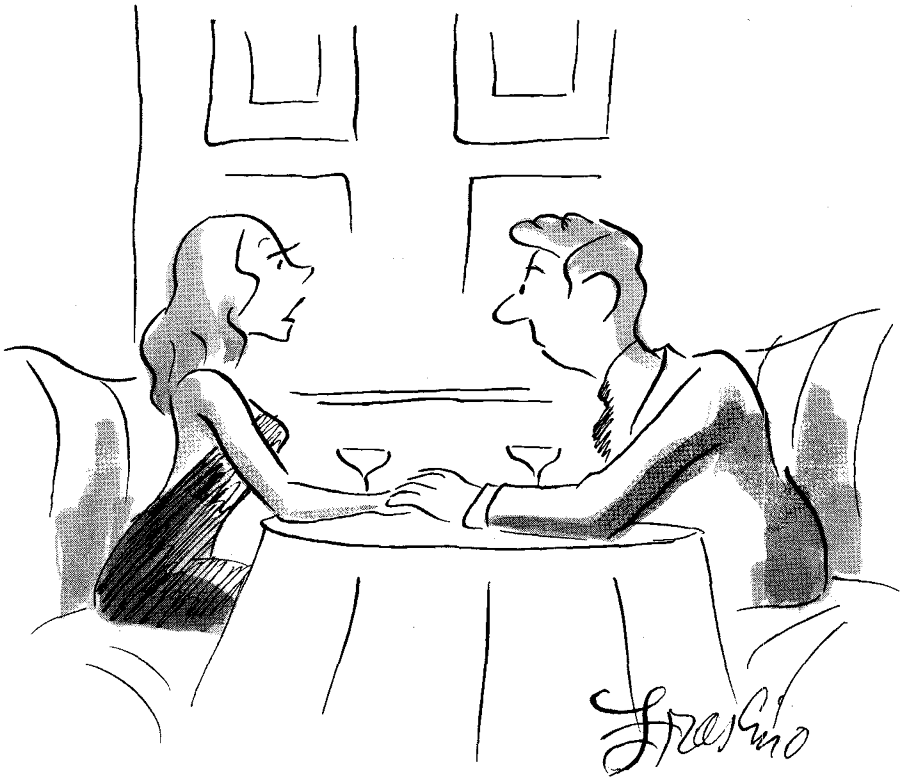

"You want only happiness, Douglas. I want wealth, power, fame, and happiness."

• •

next point: "She was intensely, *intensely* interested in the work. It was the main event of her life—*The New Yorker*, and *New Yorker* writers, and what was in the magazine. It wasn't a matter of power. It was about what was on the page or what could be on the page if something worked out."

Roger's wife, Carol, had told me that Katharine White was a better mother-in-law than mother. Roger brought this up, and said he agreed with Carol. His mother had great difficulty expressing emotion directly, he said, and her way of showing affection to her children was to worry about them. "I think a source of endless pain for her was that she'd given up her children," he said. "I think she tried to make up for what she perceived as her defection as a mother by worrying about us more than any mother had ever worried. She was this way with her writers—she'd worry about her writers' health, money, happiness, their success, their children. She was a terrific worrier—she was a major-league worrier—and for an editor to be a major-league worrier is a wonderful thing."

In Roger's assessment of the gifts that his mother had brought to her work was, I thought, also an acknowledgment that he had come to appreciate what was best about her and had found a way to live with the rest—and that he had been able to learn from her gifts. He said, "I know I have a basic feeling that definitely came from my mother: Has this been done as well as it can be done? Has the writer done what he wants to do here?"

Maxwell, who learned editing mostly from Katharine White, said much the same thing. "There are two kinds of editor—a yes editor and a no editor. Katharine was a yes editor." And it's not easy to convey a yes while you're saying no—which is what an editor has to say most of the time. Katharine knew the difficulty and the importance of getting this equation right, and it was at the heart of her approach to her work. In a self-critical letter that she wrote to a friend who had praised one of her gardening columns—a piece that frowned on certain schools of flower arranging—Katharine conveyed this, and also managed to tip her hat, with characteristic generosity, to one of her writers. The piece, she wrote, "had the great disadvantage of being an attack or knocking down and, as Marianne Moore once wisely said in a lecture to students, it's too easy to be against and much harder and more useful to be for—only she said it much better." ♦

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MEDICAL NOTES

THE THIRD AGE

After sex, what is left? Time to turn to the business of being heard, rather than seen.

BY FRANCINE DU PLESSIX GRAY

THIRTY years ago this year, a prominent Brooklyn gynecologist, Robert Wilson, published a book entitled "Feminine Forever," which wrought a revolution in women's health. Focussing on the radical drop in hormonal levels that attends midlife, he departed from the traditional view that menopause is a natural and inevitable event. He defined it instead as "a deficiency disease . . . similar to diabetes," "a serious, painful, and often crippling" ailment that "often destroys [a woman's] character along with her health," and even threatens her "relation to her family, her community, and—most important—herself." To offset the "horror of this living decay," as he referred to the worst symptoms of the climacteric, Wilson recommended that women start being dosed with estrogen in their mid-thirties in order to eliminate menopause entirely in their later years, and the "castration" it imposes on the female species.

This twentieth-century Pygmalion therefore proposed a hormonal-replacement therapy—soon to be referred to as H.R.T.—through which any woman, by maintaining rich vaginal tissues, smooth skin, supple breast contours, and other nubile attributes, could remain permanently "romantic, desirable, vibrant." Bemoaning the fact that the human female can live for decades past her reproductive age, Wilson promised that hormones would allow us to retain permanent "sexual appeal along with . . . sexual vitality" and remain multiorgasmic unto the grave. "Feminine Forever" sold more than a hundred thousand copies in the span of a few months.

Like most medicine men peddling a lucrative new product, Dr. Wilson offered the moon. His elixir, he claimed, could even preserve the moral tone of society by abolishing the depression, frigidity, and other marital discontents that he believed often incited middle-aged women to "turn to the grocery boy or the gardener for one last fling, or . . . go prospecting in local bars." H.R.T. might also deepen religious faith and save lives—as happened when a mobster came into his office brandishing a gun and threatening to kill his menopausal wife if the doctor did not heal her of her shrewish symptoms. (Wilson treated the lady with such intensive dosages of estrogen that the couple soon became lovebirds again, and the husband even experienced "a sense of repentance and of religious hope for the salvation of his otherwise-lost soul.")

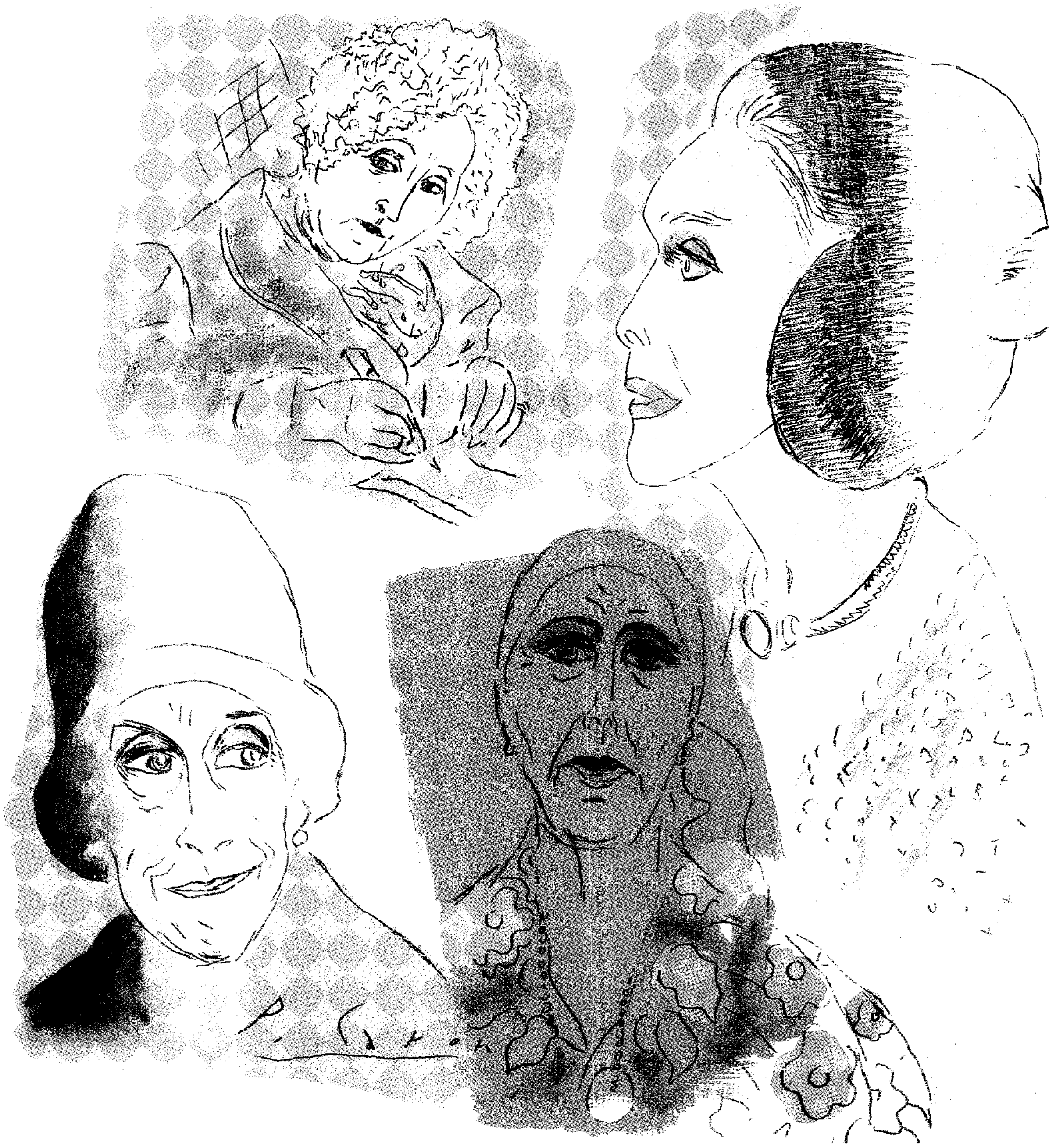
Wilson's research, which had been in good part subsidized by the pharmaceutical companies that produced his touted hormones, was shockingly flimsy: he had merely done a non-randomized study of eighty-two women between the ages of thirty-two and fifty-seven. Yet his therapies were enthusiastically embraced by many members of the medical profession. "Having outlived their ovaries, [women] may have outlived their usefulness as human beings," one of Wilson's colleagues wrote a few years after the publication of "Feminine Forever." And so sales of estrogen medications quadrupled during the years following the publication of Wilson's book. They continued to crest until 1975, when *The New England Journal of Medicine* reported that H.R.T. might cause as much as a fourteenfold increase in the risk of uterine cancer and other studies found a thirty-per-cent rise in the incidence of breast cancer.

SEXISM is as old as civilization, but ageism is a relatively novel prejudice, and has become uniquely powerful in our culture. When I first browsed through "Feminine Forever" in a gynecologist's waiting room in the early nineteen-seventies—before the H.R.T. scare had even begun, and some years before I had to make any medical decisions concerning my own change of life—it struck me that the Wilsonian philosophy is as potent a fusion of those two biases as comes to mind: old guys can be gorgeous, but old women pollute the landscape, so mask them, keep their "decay" out of sight. Although H.R.T. was being prescribed by an increasing number of gynecologists, I was just as put off by Wilson's eulogies of horny, estrogen-embalmed great-grandmothers as by his grotesque depiction of menopausal women as shrivelled hags. My unease was caused in part by the archaic model of womanhood on which his therapies were based. "A woman's body is the key to her fate," I read in "Feminine Forever." "Her physical, social, and psychological fulfillment all depend on one crucial test: Her ability to attract a suitable male and to hold his interest over many years." As far as Wilson was concerned, the male body—whose life cycle is neatly divided into the two stages of pre-reproductive and reproductive chemistries—was humanity's norm. "For the first time in history," he wrote, "women may share the promise of tomorrow as biological equals of men."

But there was another, more personal reason that I balked at Wilson's panacea: my closest childhood mentors had not been parents of reproductive age but two bewitching female relatives, a maternal great-grandmother and a paternal aunt, who were already well past midlife when I was growing up. From infancy on, I had been in awe of their freedom and power—qualities that, I sensed even then, could be achieved only in what the French call the Third Age. There was my outspoken, iron-willed Russian great-grandmother—a former professor of mathematics, long widowed—who wished to inspire me with opinions on every issue under the sun, from the downfall of the Romanov Empire to the genius of Eve Curie; and there was my garrulous, pendulous-breasted, rough-knuckled French aunt, whose lusty rural skills inspired my love of nature, and who first taught me how to plant a row of carrots, pluck a chicken, stir a pot of blackberry jam.

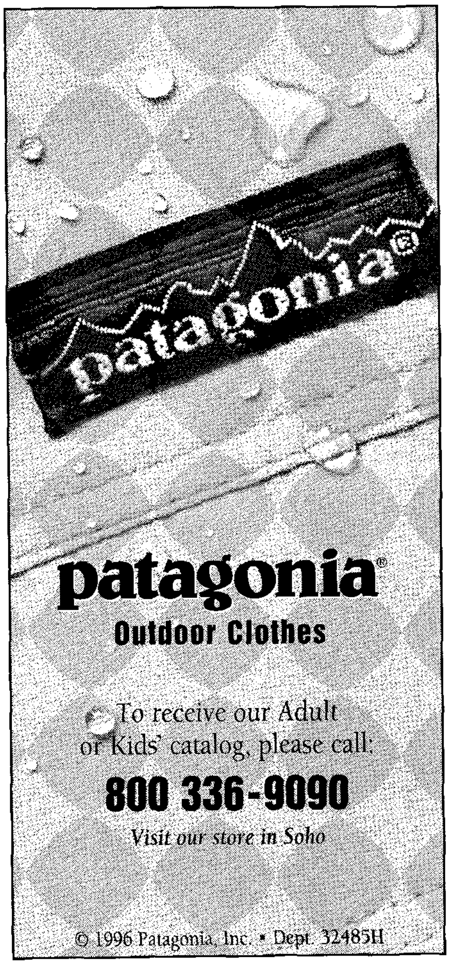
These wizened, silver-haired dynamos offered me a crucial insight: there is a wealth of things that old women can say and do which younger women—or women mimicking the physical attributes of youth—could never get away with. Demanding, bossy, voluble, they wielded the eerie authority of those who take pride in their advanced years. They had remained at center stage by taking on the attributes of the crone—that sapient, intractable, quintessentially post-hormonal female who until some centuries ago was universally looked upon as a principal repository of memory and wisdom, and still enjoys that role in much of the less "developed" world. My crones boisterously interrupted, opined, and vociferated to promote their desires and commands: which hikes must be undertaken that very week, which medication must be doled out to each ailing child, which book must be instantly read for family discussion. They belonged to that imperious generation of European women who, upon being confronted with callow youths who did not rise to give them their seats on the bus, simply dislodged them with a great whack of a parcel or a handbag. Combatting their various old-age ailments with homeopathy and arduous exercise regimens, they retained an amazing measure of physical vitality. My great-grandmother swam two miles into the open ocean during her late seventies; at the same age, my aunt suddenly decided to spend six months alone in an Indian ashram studying Eastern mysticism, only grudgingly allowing, after much persuasion, her perplexed husband to tag along. I'm still trying to catch up to them.

An equally captivating trait of seniority typified by my shrivelled, weatherbeaten mentors was their perfect aloofness from the often messy business of human sexuality. In contrast with the jazzily libidinous seniors flaunted before my generation by Wilson, they maintained a good part of their power by having forsworn the traditional business



Triumphantly post-sexual (*clockwise from top left*): *Colette, Martha Graham, Louise Nevelson, and Isak Dinesen.*

PHILIPPE CARON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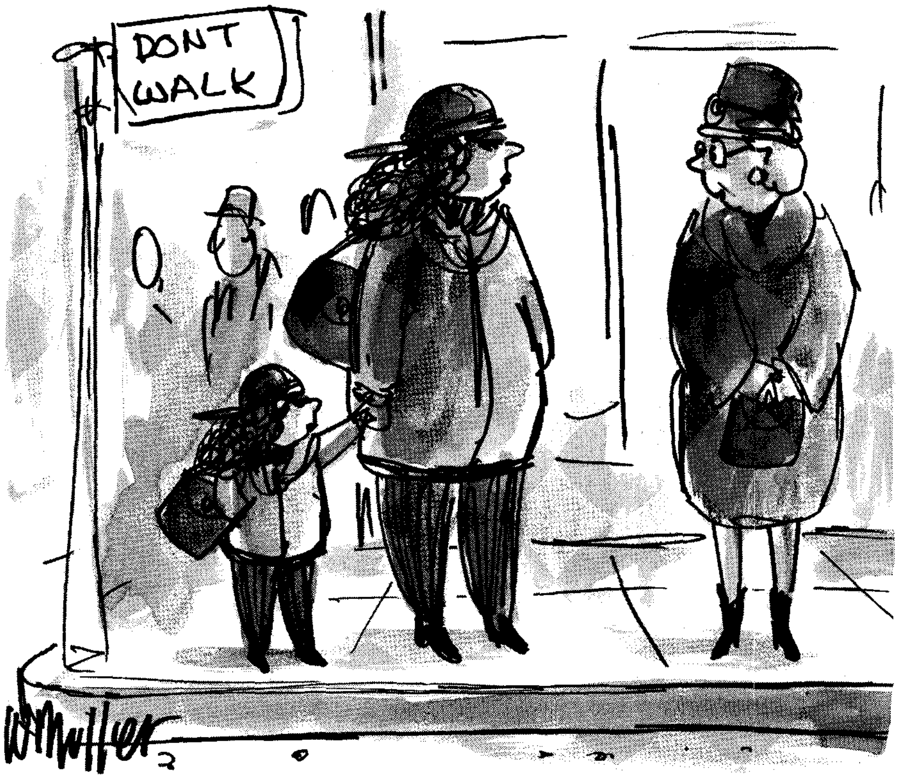


"Oh, how sweet. I haven't seen any mother-daughter outfits since the late forties."

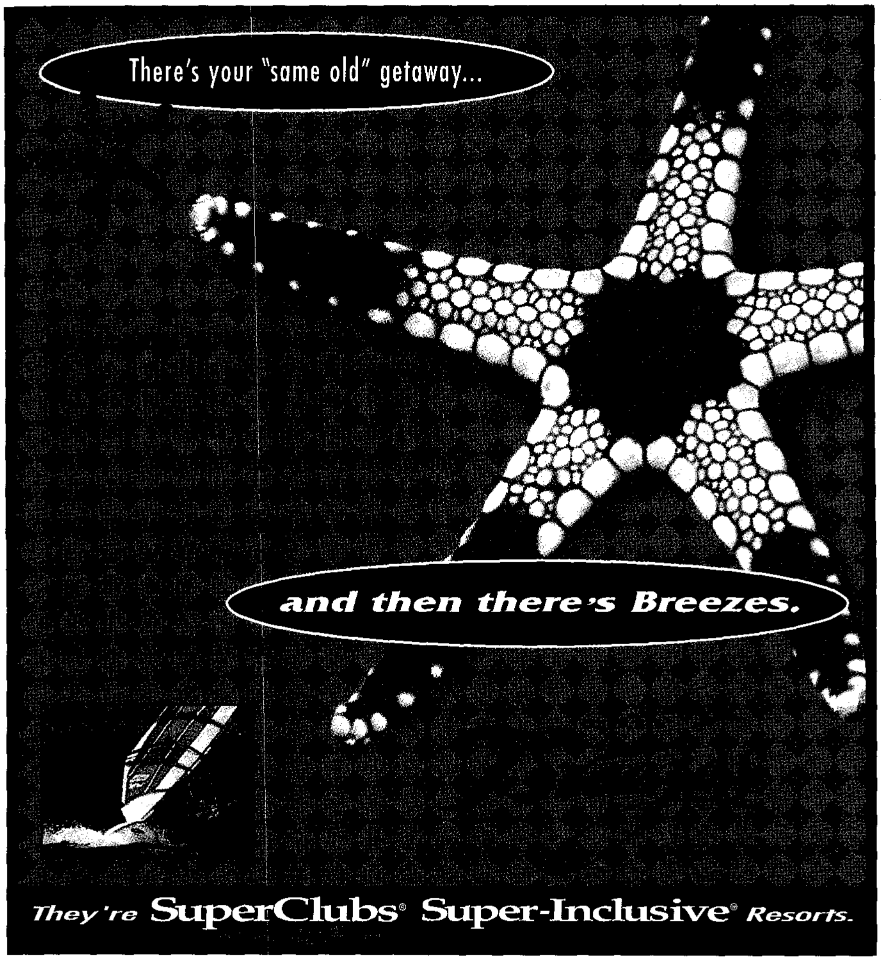
• •

of seduction, which has to do with being looked at. They were now engaged in a more urgent enterprise of advancing years—that of being heard, rather than seen.

One could well chart the course of a woman's development by tracing the fluctuations in the way she accepts the gaze of others, the shifting connections between observing and being observed. First, there is the constant demand for a caretaking presence, generally expressed through eye contact, that is made by infants and toddlers; the tranquil reciprocity of attention that the growing child learns to exchange with adults and peers; the edgy ambivalence of embarrassment and pride experienced by an adolescent girl under the stare of admiring men; the subtle process, mastered in maturity, of controlling the intensity of male scrutiny. Then come the most difficult stages, which are especially poignant for women who have known the burden of beauty. Unlike men, who may continue to be gaped at by women for their wealth, power, or fame, we are forced to acknowledge, in midlife, the waning of the desirous male glance. And, finally, in our fifties and sixties, the more fortunate among us serenely accept that we may never again be seen as objects of erotic desire, or even of aesthetic admiration; that we must acquire instead a deepened inward gaze, or intensify our observation of others, or evolve alternative means of attention-getting which transcend sexuality and depend, as the mentors of my youth taught me, upon presence, authority, and voice.

I am not espousing that crude feminism which censures face-lifts, cosmetics, and other aesthetic strategies for our advancing years, and preaches an ideology of "naturalness." This is only one of many options. For, though its dynamics may change radically, narcissism persists throughout most women's latter years. Few twentieth-century figures have devised their own physical images more fastidiously than such *virtuose* of the Third Age as Isak Dinesen, Martha Graham, Louise Nevelson, and Colette. In her own way, each of these women modulated brilliantly on the archetype of the crone: consider Dinesen's wasted face, perpetually turbaned head, and her huge, sly eyes made positively oracular by sumptuous tracings of kohl; Martha Graham's priestly garb, her eerily taut prophetess's features intimating many episodes of plastic surgery; Nevelson's continued reliance, until her death, in her late eighties, on sweeping uniforms of Scaasi design and a curtain of thick, candidly false eyelashes; and Colette, perennially swathed in pale, diaphanous chiffons as she received visitors in the bedroom to which arthritis confined her during her last years.

Another alternative was Marlene Dietrich's retreat into the narcissistic solitude of total invisibility—her decision to become all voice in Maximilian Schell's mesmerizing film portrait "Marlene," through which she chose to take leave of the world. The choice was significant, for voice remains central to the Third Age. Dinesen's, Colette's, Nevelson's triumphantly postsexual personas might have been less successful if they had not been capably vocalized. These were seductive, media-wise talkers, with an abundance of cryptic opinions, aphorisms, and eccentricities: Dinesen's shrewdly flaunted oysters-and-champagne diet was attended by her mock-decadent statements ("I detest literature, especially contemporary literature"); Nevelson's orphic, self-promoting dicta ("I . . . felt like a winner. I am a winner") were artfully presented through the scrim of black cigarillo smoke. Despite the severe physical ailments some of them suffered, these women had creative powers that reached their peak after midlife, and they exemplify my belief that any cognitive skills that may diminish in our Third Age are in part compensated for by alternative forms of mental deftness—sagacity, acumen, a wily sense of strategy. Eliciting information from Nevelson or Dietrich, or from scores of other crafty old women I have known, was a joust characterized by dodging, scheming, and waiting for the mo-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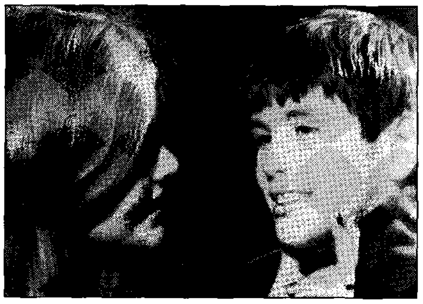

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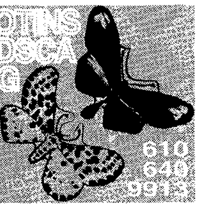

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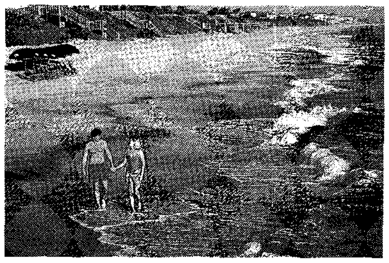
ment to pounce; it was not unlike a game of tennis doubles, that most cerebral of sports, and the only one at which senior citizens can hope to hold their own against iron-pumping thirty-year-olds.

Menopause as a "staggering catastrophe"? How little Dr. Wilson knew of human nature. A capacity for heightened perception has traditionally been linked to minimal hormonal activity. Visionary powers, from time immemorial, were generally assigned to pre-sexual or post-sexual females, whether they were vestal virgins or Delphic priestesses. Both in their lives and in their fictional creations, Dinesen and Colette personified that keen insight and self-reliance which can be the hallmark of our post-hormonal years. Baroness Blixen, rebaptizing herself Isak (the Hebrew word for "one who laughs") after the child conceived in late age by Abraham and Sarah, fully gave birth to her writer self only in her late forties, when her lover's death had put an end to her erotic life. Colette wrote "Break of Day" in her mid-fifties (the precise translation of the French title is "The Birth of Day") to celebrate the nascence of a post-sexual self enriched by deeper powers of observation and an increased need for intense friendships. She also wrote it to glorify "the supreme elegance of knowing how to wane."

Few literary heroines depict a more powerful view of aging than Léa, the retired courtesan of Colette's "The Last of Chéri." Léa, now approaching her sixties, has turned hugely fat; her shrunken eyes are marred with red veins, and she wears her gray hair in a sloppily shaggy, mannish cut, yet "her crushing weight" gives her "serenity, strength, an air of repose." Like many of us who are past midlife, Léa looks back on her former sexuality as on a virus she barely survived. Metaphors of androgynous transcendence abound in Colette's portrait: Léa has turned "simple, merry . . . like an old man," her joviality is "like a legendary friar's," her great jowls now quiver like those of Louis XVI, she has joyfully achieved "a sort of sexless dignity." When Léa's hapless young former lover, Chéri, visits her for the



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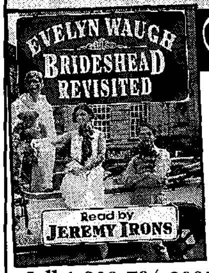

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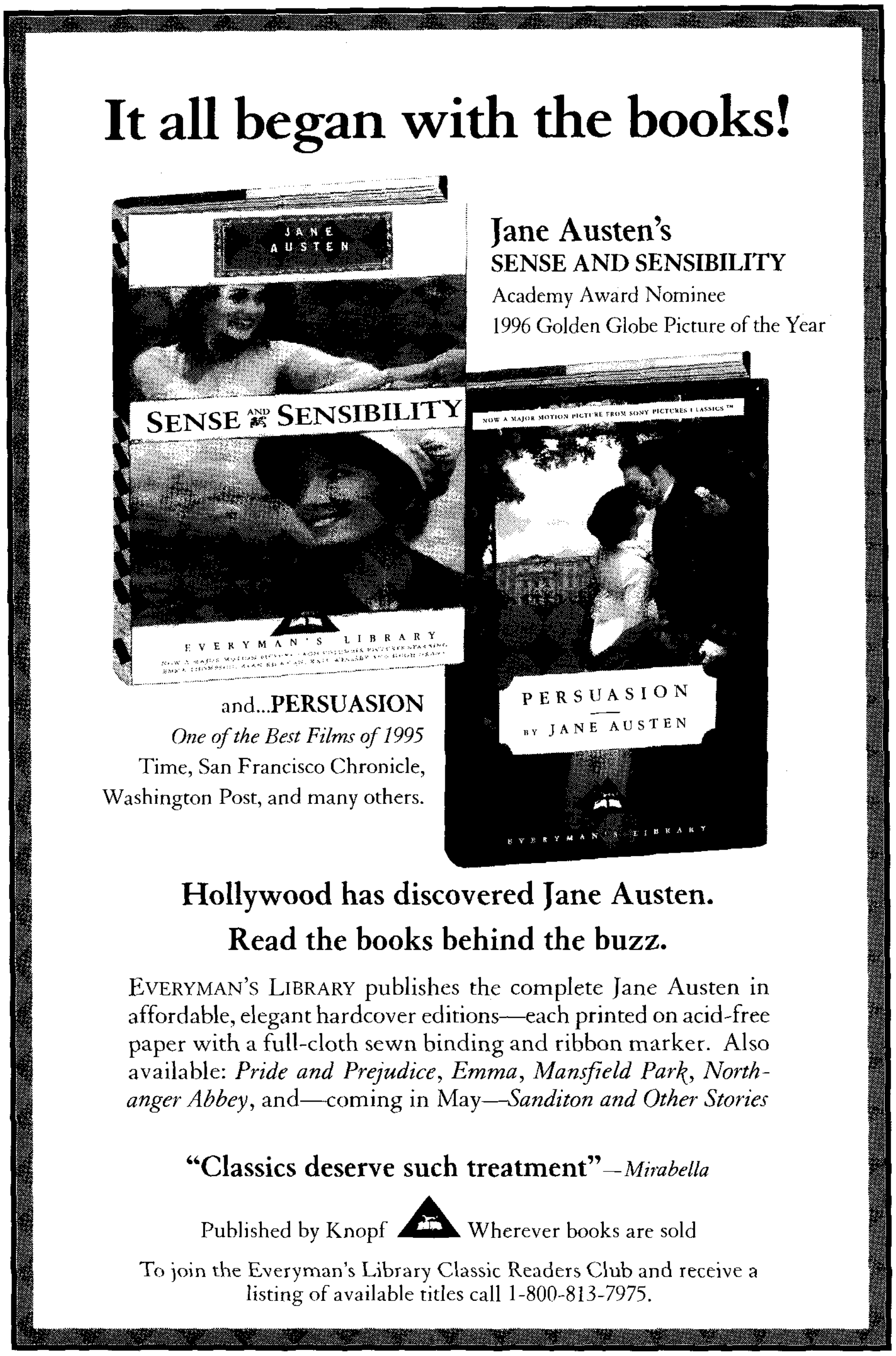
first time in five years, he is terrified and nearly destroyed by her metamorphosis. Having renounced the visibility of her earlier years, she is now recognizable only by one single trait: her voice, that "hearty, unaffected laugh, deep-toned, rippling down a descending scale," which sends Chéri into a panic of mourning and grief. Colette's fable is relevant to Dr. Wilson's insistence on the aesthetics of youth. Sensing the increased autonomy that can attend women's midlife changes, our men may mourn the loss of our physical charms far more than we do. Those are, after all, attributes through which they have always controlled us.

There are women, I'm sure, who take pride in remaining sexually active far into their eighties. (Nice work if you can get it.) But, because of the quaint taboos that still shroud the association of carnality and old age, few of them have raised their voices to praise the delights of a prolonged libido. To this day, metaphors of rebirth, of renewed vitality brought by sublimation (Margaret Mead called it "postmenopausal zest"), continue to dominate the most eloquent chronicles of women's seniority. To Germaine Greer, our truest self can emerge from the "chrysalis of conditioning" only after menopause has liberated us from our reproductive bodies. "The woman who is willing to make that change must become pregnant with herself, at last," Ursula Le Guin writes about the psychic adjustments essential to midlife. And the poet Maxine Kumin writes, "When Sleeping Beauty wakes up, she is almost fifty years old." Incited by similar convictions, I refused the therapy Dr. Wilson had pioneered and embarked on a hormone-free Third Age.

I AM aware that hormones can greatly alleviate the genuine suffering that menopause wreaks on some women—the wretched, deeply embarrassing hot flashes that can occur publicly in midday, scorching our faces like a red poker and drenching us in sweat. I am also aware that H.R.T.—as prescribed by many admirable and caring doctors—might help to sharpen our



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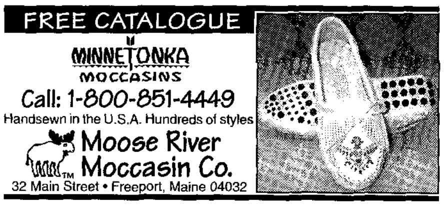
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mental faculties, and that, for some, the protection it offers from heart attacks and osteoporosis might well outweigh the risks it poses. My own menopausal symptoms were not of the very worst kind, having consisted of greatly increased insomnia, which had plagued me since childhood anyway, and hot flashes that were experienced mostly at night. As for heart disease and osteoporosis, I already have a fairly advanced case of the latter. Yet my personal choice is to combat it the way my aunt and great-grandmother did—through rigorous diet and exercise—rather than by ingesting chemicals whose long-term risks are still in the course of being documented, and which are often prescribed on the basis of a spurious anthropology: a generation of doctors, of whom Wilson was the most flamboyant pioneer, have medicalized menopause by defining it as a "disease," thus preventing women from viewing the Third Age as their most liberated and potentially most glorious years.

Moreover, I sense that the Wilsonian legacy of hormonal narcissism has been forcibly imposed on many of us. I have read surveys, seldom quoted in medical literature, that describe women as being far less exuberant than their doctors about H.R.T. and find that many of them feel they have been brainwashed and manipulated by its apostles. According to women who have refused hormones or stopped taking them, a euphemism frequently used by gynecologists to scold such "patients" is "noncompliance." (This telling epithet was once hurled at me by one of several doctors who tried to bully me into an H.R.T. program.) And consider the following findings: (1) Almost two-thirds of postmenopausal women report that no doctor has ever informed them adequately of the potential risks and benefits of H.R.T. (2) One "patient" out of five given a prescription for estrogen compounds never even fills it. (3) Of those women who do begin taking the hormone, one-third stop the therapy within nine months, and more than half quit within a year. (4) Seventy-five per cent of women will never have osteoporosis, yet hundreds of thousands of them are routinely started on H.R.T. to prevent fractures.

How appropriate is it to give powerful drugs whose effects are still unpredictable to healthy women as a preventive against diseases they may never have? Confronted by many doctors' autocratic insistence on hormonal treatments, and by their reluctance to discuss the balance sheet of possible benefits and risks (how could they, when the figures aren't in yet?), American women have taken a new initiative. They have increasingly turned to a venerable national custom—the founding of self-help organizations and consciousness-raising groups. These burgeoning networks express themselves through newsletters with names like *Hot Flash*, *Prime Time*, *Healthsharing*, *MidLife Woman*, or *A Friend Indeed.* Contributed to by nurses and women doctors but written primarily by nonmedical women, these publications are civil, less radical offshoots of the "Our Bodies, Ourselves" movement of the nineteen-seventies. Their editors cull data nationwide on H.R.T., osteoporosis, depression, and other Third Age issues from medical journals and conferences such as those held annually by the North American Menopause Society. The newsletters discuss stereotypes of women's sexual identity as well as the specifics of hormonal treatments, and give particular attention to such supplementary alternative measures as herbs, vitamins, diet, and exercise. Their principal goal is to help women make better-informed decisions in their handling of midlife changes, and they focus, above all, on countering the popular medical model of menopause as a disease.

These democratic information channels are a welcome development. They also reinforce my belief that both psychically and physically a healthy Third Age is tough, demanding work—a process far more complex than the taking of pills. I have suffered enough from the chronic physical pains of aging to know how humbling and time-consuming many tasks can become; how much patience and effort it takes daily to wash, dress, and prepare oneself with dignity for any encounter with the world. I have learned that diligence—relentless alertness—is the name of the game; that, beyond luck, our comfort and survival in the Third Age hinges mostly on gamesmanship and strategy. Work hard to outfox that arthritic hip, that immobile thumb. Work hard to debunk Dr. Wilson's fraudulent view of menopause as "a surpassing tragedy." Work hard to outmaneuver Brother Ass—St. Francis of Assisi's euphemism for the human body, that stubborn animal with whom, for better or worse, we must cohabit for increasingly long lifetimes. In the short story "The Monkey," Dinesen writes, "[He] kissed her hand . . . and then all at once he got such a terrible impression of strength and cunning that it was as if he had touched an electric eel. Women, he thought, when they are old enough to have done with the business of being women, and can let loose their strength, must be the most powerful creatures in the whole world." ♦

WHY HIGH HEELS?

BY SANDRA BERNHARD

"WHY do you insist on wearing those outrageous high heels?" the woman asks. I cross my legs and admire the bulge of my calf exaggerated by the arch of my shoe, and stare down at her conservative little boat-shaped slip-on that gives her foot the illusion of floating away down a shallow creek like a withered fall leaf. I sip on a sweaty Scotch and reply warmly, "When I walk out the door in a good pair of heels, and I'm not referring to some kitschy crap that you can buy on a trip to Frederick's of Hollywood but a really solid set of heels from Manolo or Prada Chanel Clergerie, I never feel vulnerable, there's no time for any weakness, I feel focussed strong secure, my stride is potent and no one hassles me when I'm standing on the corner hailing a cab, you'd better believe I'm the first fare he'll throw on his brakes for, you put the two of us just a few yards away, he'll pass you right by. Why? Because I demand respect and my heels back me up—so don't go worrying about me, I've never been better, care for a cigar?" ♦

Sandra Bernhard, photographed in Los Angeles, by Annie Leibovitz.

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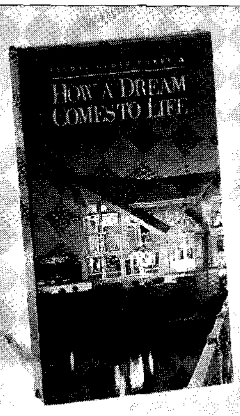

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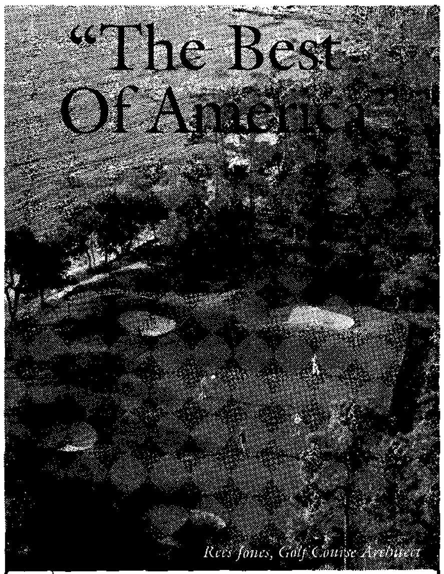

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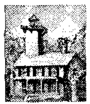

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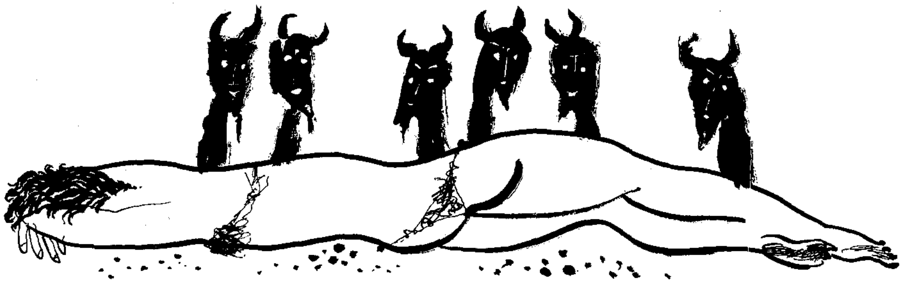
MEDICAL NOTES

THE WANDERING WOMB

Be thankful you don't have to consult an ancient gynecologist.

BY MARY LEFKOWITZ



FOR women, certainly, anatomy is destiny. Not so much because of what they lack as because of what they possess, which is to say wombs, vaginas, breasts: the female reproductive system is a weakness of both the body and the mind. That, at any rate, is how men seem to have thought of it for millennia. At the beginning of this century, male educators argued that women would injure their wombs if they studied Greek or mathematics. Ancient doctors believed that the womb could move about in a woman's body, putting pressure on other organs and so causing serious illness, and even death.

We learn from an Egyptian papyrus of 1900 B.C. that if a woman is "ill in seeing," or suffers from pain in her eyes, or cannot open her jaws, the reason is that her womb is starved or dislocated. More than a thousand years later, Greek doctors still based their diagnoses of female ailments and female behavior on the false hypotheses developed by the Egyptians. The womb was held responsible for virtually all diseases experienced by women, even mental disorders. A woman who was unwell was said to be "womby"; in later times, particularly in the nineteenth century, their malady became known as hysteria—"wombiness."

How could such diseases of the womb be cured? According to the fourth-century Hippocratic doctors, there were two viable courses of treatment. One was sexual intercourse, especially if it resulted in pregnancy. The other course of treatment involved medication. If a womb had risen to the upper abdomen, a doctor might lure it back into place by inserting sweet-scented vaginal suppositories in his patient. If the doctor thought that the womb had moved down toward the patient's hips, so that its opening was obstructed, fumigations or vapors were used to open it and allow the woman to menstruate. Another vaginal irritant was animal excrement, whose use, like the notion of the wandering womb, was inherited from the Egyptians. One "cure" recommended in the Papyrus Ebers, an Egyptian medical document dating from the sixteenth century B.C., required that the woman herself apply on her affected organs dried human excrement mixed with beer froth.

Greek doctors, for their part, prescribed cow or goat dung, or bird droppings, often in combination with fragrant wine or perfumes like rose oil. (Cures derived from animal excrement are used today: a form of the estrogen used in hormone-replacement therapy is extracted from the urine of pregnant mares.) Why did ancient doctors think that excrement, which they never used on men, would work on women? Perhaps (as the scholar Heinrich von Staden suggests) they thought that the womb was polluted, and so employed the ritual technique of fighting pollution with pollution, in an early version of homeopathy.

Even today, when wombs have stopped wandering, medicine tends to pathologize the vagaries of the female reproductive system, from menarche to menopause. Women of ancient times themselves looked back with nostalgia on the carefree years of their childhood. Who could blame them for dreading, in sickness and in health, the prospect of their womb-dominated years? ♦

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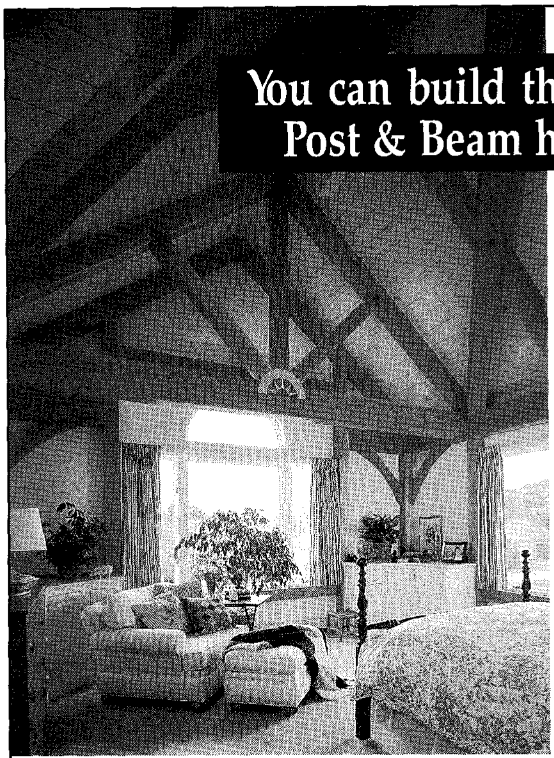

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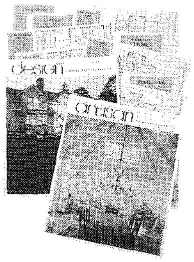

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ANNALS OF SISTERHOOD

DON'T TELL MOTHER

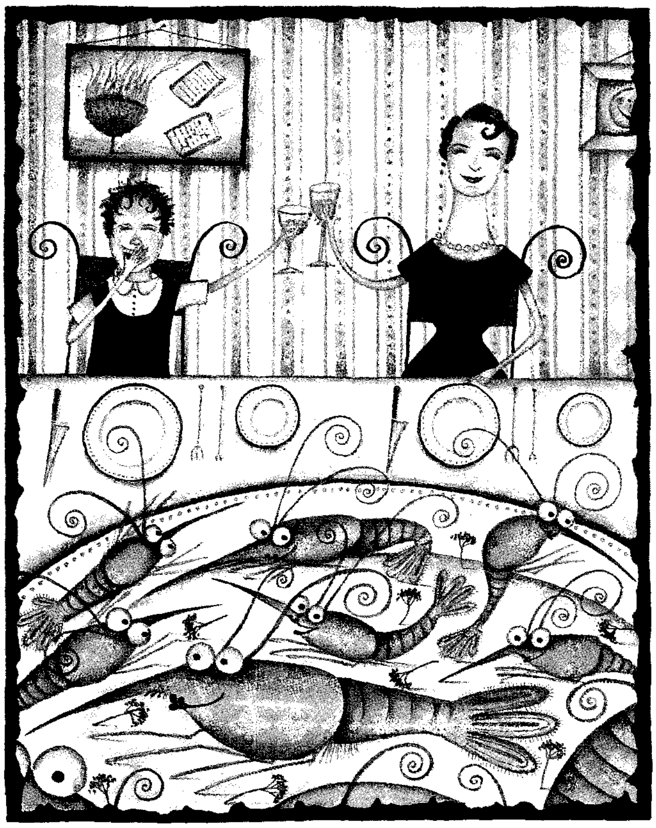
The stories my big sister would really rather I didn't repeat.

BY WENDY WASSERSTEIN

I HAD a temperature of a hundred and four and tonsillitis at my oldest sister Sandra's first wedding. I was six years old at the time, which made her nineteen. My mother tells me that all I wanted was to get out of bed and put on my pearls and white gloves. In fact, my mother repeats this story whenever she feels that I no longer accessorize enough. All I remember from the entire nuptials, which took place in our home in Brooklyn, a sizable red brick corner Dutch colonial, was my older siblings, Bruce and Georgette, racing upstairs into my sickroom to let me know that Cousin So-and-So had just fallen through the floor while freely interpreting the hora.

My sister Sandra—known to the world as Sandra, never Sandy, from the day she left the Flatbush Dutch colonial—has always preferred that I not dwell on the wedding story. Frankly, my oldest sister prefers not to dwell on Brooklyn, our parents, anyone's former marriages, or anything personal, including health and religion—and especially not the cousin who fell through the floor. (I never saw the hole, I never heard of any broken limbs, but I still choose to believe the story.) Even now, Sandra, from behind her desk at the penthouse offices of Clark & Weinstock, management consultants, advises, "If you really want to talk about me as a serious person, you have to think about how that story sounds and looks."

It would be impossible not to talk about my sister as a serious person. She started college at sixteen and graduated with honors at nineteen. Over the course of three decades in mainstream—or, as she prefers, "blue chip"—corporate America, Sandra was the first female product-group manager at General Foods, in 1969; the first female president of a division of American Express, in 1980; and the first female to run corporate affairs as a senior officer at Citicorp, in 1989. In other words, she never had the luxury of not demanding to be taken seriously.



She's capable. I'm funny. Except for when I'm surprisingly capable and she's inexplicably funny.

CLARE MACKIE

Two years after her first marriage, Sandra disappeared from my life: she moved to London. She was twenty-one and separated, and she began a career in advertising at the London Press Exchange. For me, "Sandra in London," and even the very tasteful name of Meyer she'd acquired from her husband, became a mythical, glamorous alternative to the bouffant-hair-sprayed mothers at the Parent-Teacher Association, and even to our own mother, Lola, the Polish-born dancer, predestined to plié while broiling lamb chops in Brooklyn. I bragged to the girls' baseball team that my big sister in Europe wrote the "little dab will do ya" Brylcreem jingle. Later, of course, I found out that she was actually an account executive, but it all certainly seemed far more desirable than growing up to chaperon the school trip to the Horowitz Margareten matzo factory.

Around the time that Sandra returned permanently from London, my family moved from Brooklyn to the Upper East Side. When I was in high school, she had a career-gal pad in the East Fifties and was commuting daily to General Foods, in White Plains. Shortly after the Civil Rights Act, the corporate food giant hired the first female Associate Product Manager/Postum and Toast 'em Pop Ups—my sister Sandra. Our family had cases of unopened Toast 'ems in the kitchen cabinets, and Sandra Meyer moved up to Marketing Manager/Maxwell House. In that position, she was in charge of the Maxwell House–Folgers coffee wars.

As far as I was concerned, my oldest sister personally sent Tang to the moon and plumped every raisin in Post Raisin Bran. When I visited her in her ever larger offices, she was always the only woman along her corridor who wasn't sitting outside an office glued behind a typewriter and a telephone. Very grownup, very Darien-looking men named Ed, Rick, and Jim were always popping in and out. Somehow, the love-ins of the late sixties seemed to be eluding them. I always politely shook the gentlemen's hands and couldn't wait for them to leave, so I could talk to my sister some more about my prospects at the Horace Mann prom, which were surely more interesting than the marketing potential of Brim.

My mother often asked me if I thought Sandra would marry one of these Eds, Ricks, or Jims. I remember dinners at places like Le Pavillon with my parents, Bruce, Georgette, myself, and Sandra accompanied by various General Foods

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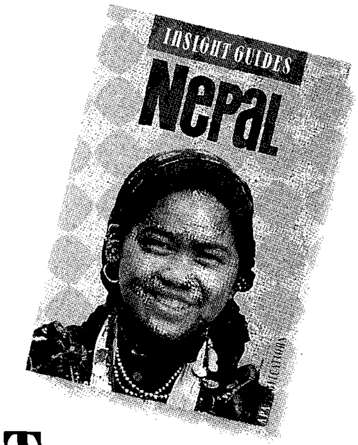
suits. Afterward, Lola would press me to determine whether the fella meant anything special to her eldest daughter. I never told her that I personally loved it that Sandra was single—partly because I knew those inspection dinners would stop as soon as she married again. I also never told her that my big sister advised me while I was still in high school to stay single until I was thirty unless I fell madly in love. Sex was one thing, and marriage was another, she said.

Sandra finally married the handsomest man who came to dinner, a Robert Redford look-alike. When she gave birth to her first daughter, Jenifer, there was mandatory unpaid maternity leave at General Foods. Therefore, my sister hid her pregnancy until her next promotion was confirmed. Her efficiency in life management, however, never undermined her maternal commitment. In fact, if you asked my mother, the domestic dancer, and my oldest sister, the corporate player, what was the most important thing they'd done with their lives, they'd both say, "Having children." However, my mother would say the answer was obvious, because "there's no children like my children," which I always thought should have been sung by Ethel Merman, while Sandra would clip, "Jenifer and Samantha are such capable and independent women."

I wish that my sister would tell me what toll her life has taken on her. Rather, I wish I could get an illogical, non-positioned answer. But I suppose it's no different than when I'm asked if I think of myself as a woman playwright. Frankly, there's really no discussion in either case. My sister would say that life takes its toll, male or female, period. I heartily disagree. I can't help but wonder what difference it would have made in my sister's personal or corporate life if she had been a man. Of course, Sandra would say that if you're a player, gender shouldn't be an issue. But, for my generation, gender *is* the issue.

After my sister's second marriage dissolved, she went to American Express as Vice-President, Worldwide Card Product Marketing. In my mind, she and Lou Gerstner, now the chairman of I.B.M., spent lunches at the Four Seasons devising new uses for the gold card. At that time, my sister fell madly in love—the sort of love she advised me to wait for—with Andrew Kershaw,



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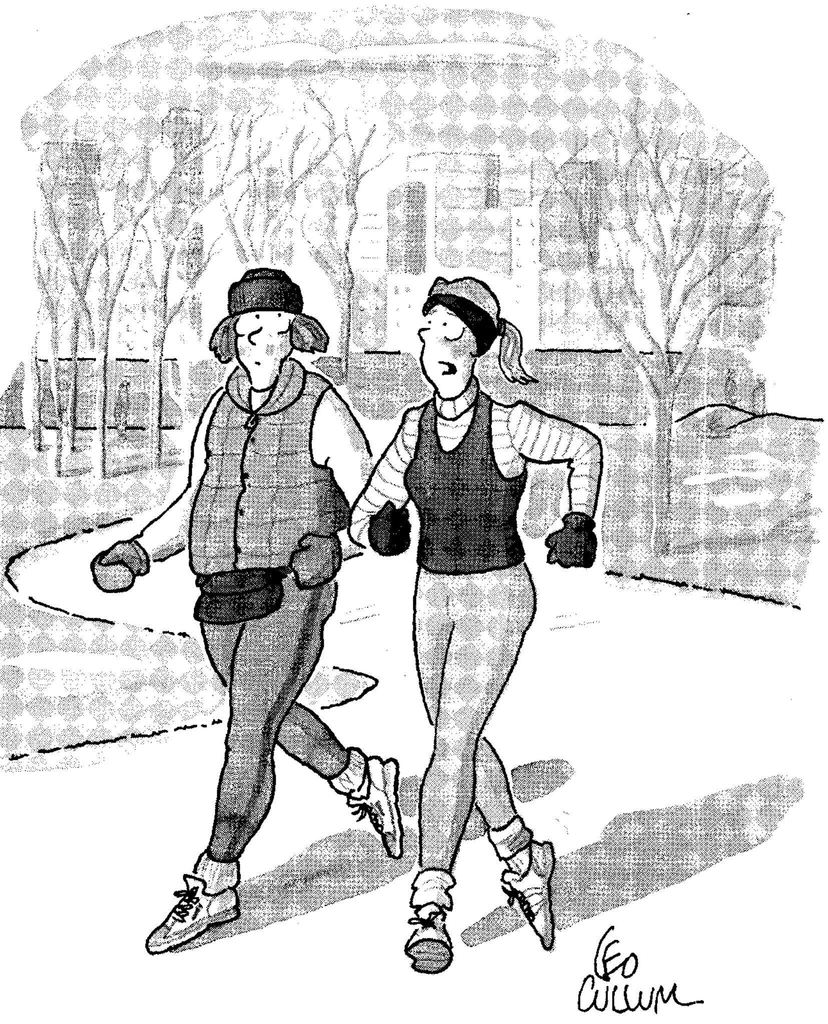
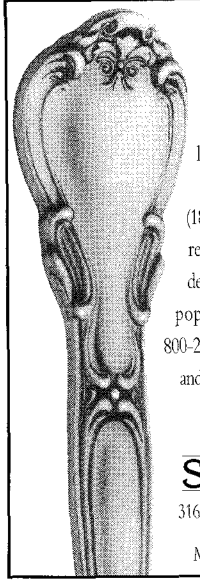


"It's right about here that my socks fall down."

• •

then the chairman of Ogilvy & Mather, North America. Andrew died in her house in Pound Ridge six weeks before the wedding. I waited with Sandra in her Madison Avenue apartment while lawyers arrived to take the paintings he'd brought with him back to his first wife, in Toronto. Like a good baby sister, I remained in the background for the entire event. I wanted to take care of her without her knowing what I was doing. My sister and I stay within our defined boundaries. She's capable. I'm funny. Except for when I'm surprisingly capable and she's inexplicably funny.

Our mother referred to Sandra when we were growing up as Strazac, which means "fireman" but which Mother, for reasons of her own, translated as "a general in the Polish Army." Even as a child, Sandra liked to be in charge. For the record, I was called Epidemic, because I was always hanging around and was impossible to send off to bed. Georgette was known as Gorgeous, for the obvious reasons, and Bruce remained Bruce. When I look at pictures of Sandra from college, I see a rather delicate-looking young American girl with beaming brown eyes and lovely tapered hands. No one would mistake her for a Polish general, but, of course, I'm not often confused with black cholera or influenza, either. A few years ago, when Sandra was a senior corporate officer at Citibank, she broke her leg, and a day after surgery, when a nurse came into her hospital room to change her I.V., Sandra snapped at her, "Can't you see I'm busy? I'm on a business call!" This sort of will is beyond any *strazac*, or Poland would never have been divided. This sort of determination, I'm sure, is responsible for a very well-placed corporate lawyer's telling me that my sister saved John Reed's job at Citibank during its financial



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crisis. John Reed is—"of course," as my sister would say—the chairman. What my sister won't discuss is why so many of her male corporate contemporaries have become chairmen and she has not. My sister is a strong woman but not an angry one. Ultimately, she's a team player.

My favorite Sandra story is another one she would prefer I not tell. Sandra came home twice from Europe during her five years away. During one of those visits, I was a third grader at the Yeshiva Flatbush. (I feel Sandra already blushing.) Every Saturday, I took dancing classes at the June Taylor School, in Manhattan, rather than attend temple services. In order for Sandra and me to get to know each other, my mother suggested that Sandra pick me up from school and take me to Howard Johnson's for a grilled-cheese sandwich and on to Radio City for the stage spectacular and a Doris Day film.

My phantom neo-British sister in the gray flannel suit arrived at the school of dance, immediately warned me "Don't tell Mother," and hustled me off to the House of Chan for spareribs and shrimp with lobster sauce. Neither dish was on the rabbi's recommended dietary list at the yeshiva. I was terrified that a burning bush or two stone tablets would come hurtling through the House of Chan's window. But I was with my glamorous big sister, who everyone told me was so brilliant, so I cleaned my plate.

After lunch, we skipped Radio City; Sandra had no interest in the Rockettes or Doris Day. We went to the Sutton Theatre, on East Fifty-seventh Street, which seemed to me the ultimate in style: they served demitasse in the lobby. The feature film was "Expresso Bongo," starring Laurence Harvey as Cliff Richard's tawdry musical agent. All I remember is a number in a strip joint with girls dancing in mini-kilts and no tops. I knew that in whatever Doris Day movie we were meant to be going to she would be wearing a top.

I never told my mother, but I loved everything about that afternoon. My big sister Sandra showed me that women, especially a female general with an epidemic, could go anywhere. ♦

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SHOUTS & MURMURS

CASTING CALL

BY AMY SEDARIS

Casting Immediately for Upcoming, as yet Untitled Full-Length Feature Film Produced by R. Donald Spellcheck. (Previous Credits: "Low Impact," "Terminal Adversity," and "Hard Ground Cover.") Starting Date: Mid-Spring/Summer. Characters include:

Carlton Whitehead: Carlton is in his late sixties or early seventies, his leathery, handsome face graced with distinguished pocks, canyons, and divots. The man is a "doer"—a feisty, heat-seeking pragmatist with a fondness for tailored tweeds and classic antique scooters. The chairman of the corporate-studies program at a prestigious university, Carlton is brought under suspicion when he is discovered literally saddling a few of his lazier female students with extra homework. His use of spurs, crops, and bits is misinterpreted, and charges are unfairly brought against him by the envious dean of women's athletics. His reputation on the line, Carlton leaves his pregnant wife and nagging, suspicious mistress and sets out on a course of personal discovery leading him toward love, laughter, and redemption in the arms of a headstrong thoroughbred only he can break.

Celeste Whitehead: Pregnant wife of Carlton. Celeste is in her mid- to late twenties and shows it. Her beauty spent, she is a morose, puffy woman, weak-willed and manipulative. Getting herself pregnant is just another of her tiresome ploys, designed to entrap a husband who no longer loves or respects her. This actress must be willing to have her feet and ankles chemically swollen while realistically simulating both morning sickness and the effects of a tequila hangover.

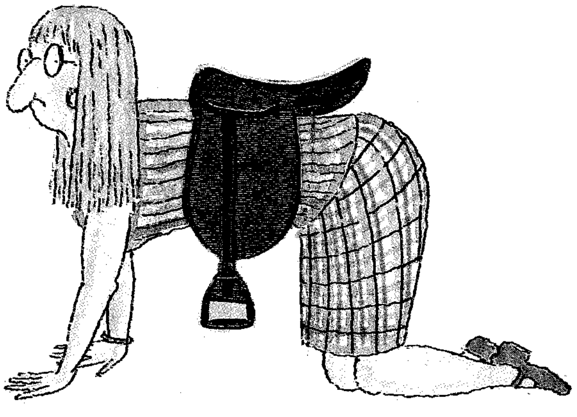
Brandi (Elizabeth) Sturges: Celeste's sister and the nagging, suspicious mistress of Carlton Whitehead. A younger, considerably less bloated version of her sister, Brandi (Elizabeth) possesses a beauty clouded by her obsessive mistrust of others. Because she is a relentless nagger, her one line of dialogue—"When are you going to leave my sister and where are those jeans you promised me?"—will be repeated over and over and should convey a wide range of emotions, from seductive threat to full-throttle desperation. Good small part for a teenager. Clear complexion a must.

Amanda K.: A lazy female student at the prestigious university, Amanda K. is in her late teens or early twenties. Undeserving of her beauty, she must wear a saddle and capably support the weight of a hundred-and-ninety-pound man. Amanda K. is bitter and cries often.

Dean Bobbi Midges: Dean Midges is in her early fifties and is "everything you'd want in a man." A colleague of Carlton Whitehead, she heads the women's-athletics department of the prestigious university. Must be able to smoke a corncob pipe convincingly, hurl a medicine ball, and jog several miles while wearing a twenty-five-pound chain around her neck. Angry, domineering, ugly to look at.

Sheffy Barnes: Sheffy should be no older than seventeen. A former calendar model, she's currently a topnotch defense attorney who entered the legal profession in the hope of one day defending a man exactly like the bold and charismatic Carlton Whitehead. A spunky, headstrong thoroughbred, she must be comfortable with nude scenes and familiar with long-form Tai Chi.

Judge Lucille Speaks-Fleishman: Judge Speaks-Fleishman is in her late sixties but should appear much older—her ruddy face marked with deep, chaotic folds and creases, her head of thinning hair supported by a thin and brittle turkey neck. Lucille has a prosthetic right hand and an enormous chip on her shoulder, her bitterness accentuated by a recent stroke, which has left her speechless and palsied. Judge Speaks-Fleishman despises Carlton Whitehead because he is everything she is not: attractive, distinguished, and articulate. He has integrity and spirit, while she lives alone in a dung-colored camper, huddled up in her sleeping bag with Tansy, the volatile bobcat she views as her equal. This is a calculating, ambitious woman, willing to destroy an innocent man in order to advance her political goals. Wandering eye a plus. Must be willing to expose breasts and work closely with bobcat. ♦



VICTORIA ROBERTS

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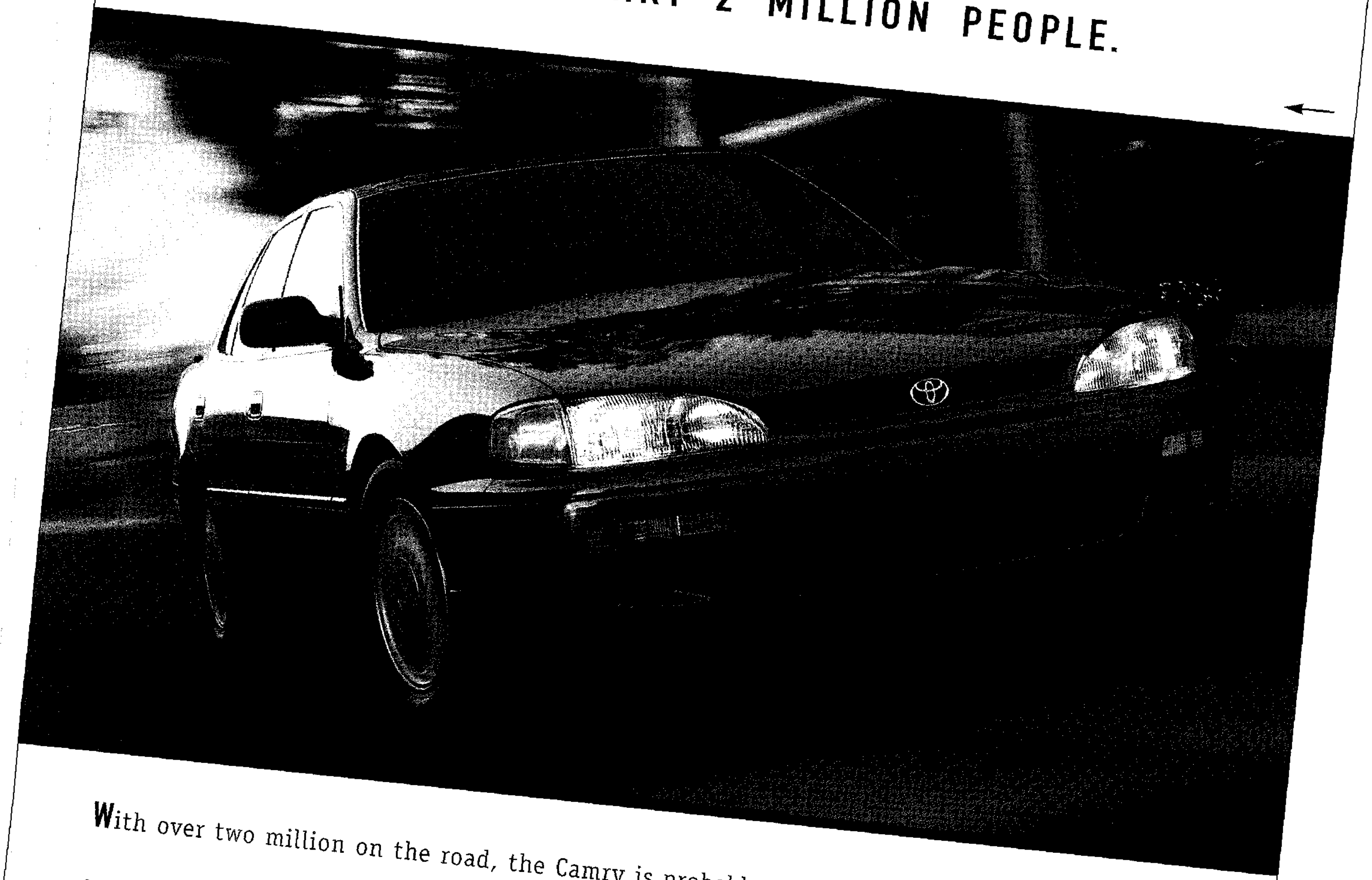

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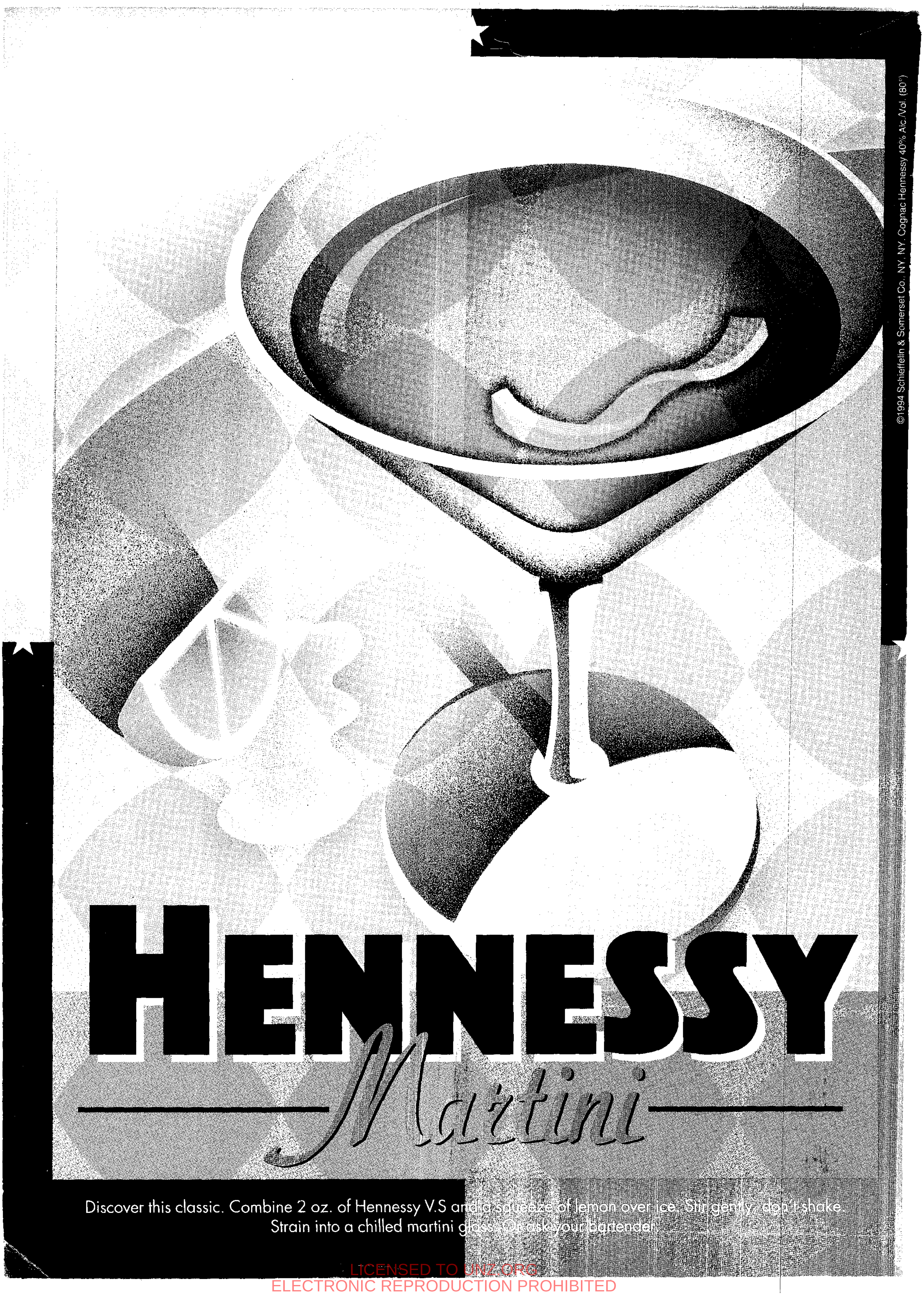

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